

THE RAILWAY AND LOCOMOTIVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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BULLETIN No. 67A

THE NARROW GAGE RAILROADS  
OF  
COLORADO

By  
LUCIUS BEEBE



AUGUST 1946

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THE JOURNAL OF JAMES M. SMITH  
1846-1847

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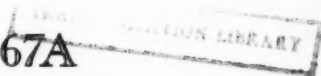
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PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARLES CLEGG AND THE AUTHOR

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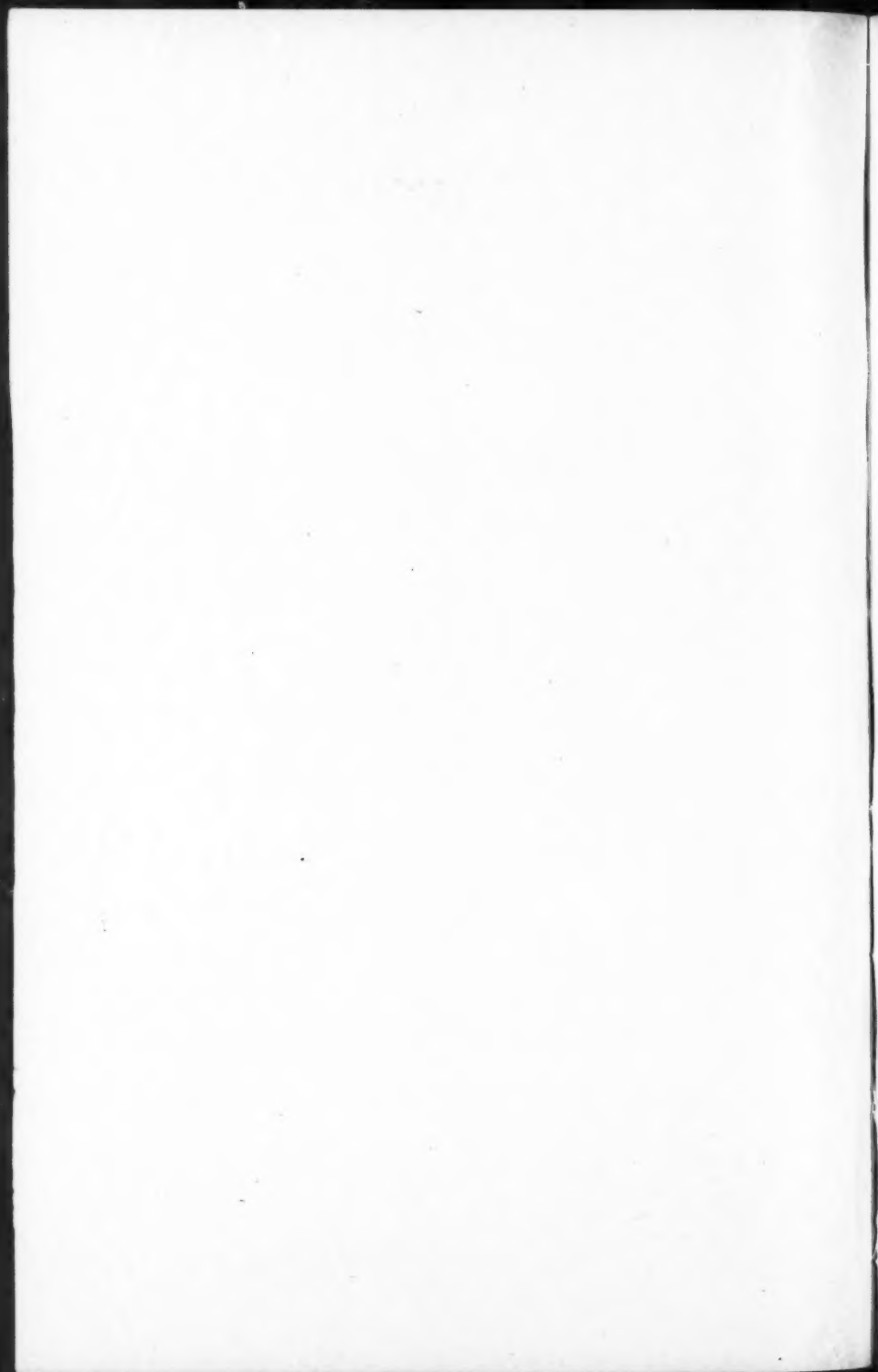
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The material on the narrow gage railroads of southwestern Colorado prepared for the bulletin will eventually be included in "Mixed Train Daily, A Book of Short Line Railroads" by Lucius Beebe, with photographs by Charles M. Clegg, Jr., and the author, which is scheduled for publication in the fall of 1947 by E. P. Dutton & Co., \$12.50 net. The volume will also include color plates from six original oil paintings of short line railroading by Howard Fogg, staff artist of the American Locomotive Company. The material was gathered by Mr. Beebe and Mr. Clegg during two separate periods of several weeks' duration, one in winter and one in summer time, spent in and around Durango. Mr. Beebe has been for the past nineteen years a member of the editorial staff of the *New York Herald Tribune* and is author of several photographic histories of railroading: "High Iron," "High Liners," "Trains In Transition" and "Highball." Mr. Clegg, his photographic associate, is a student of J. Ghislain Lootens, celebrated photographic authority and instructor, and his pictures have frequently appeared in *Trains*, *Railroad Magazine*, *Popular Photography* and in Mr. Beebe's books.

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The author of this bulletin, Lucius Beebe, needs no introduction to our membership. Nearly all of us are acquainted with his four books and their handsome illustrations — no lover of the "iron horse" could but help admire them. In this publication, the author has judiciously mixed a certain amount of local color together with his railroad history. We hope that this combination, together with the illustrations, will prove to be of interest to our membership and your Editor wishes to express his appreciation and thanks to Mr. Beebe for furnishing this interesting contribution.

The Editor wishes to call your attention to the book review of "Santa Fe" which was prepared by Prof. R. C. Overton. Although this review is of greater length than we generally publish, this book has come in for considerable discussion and criticism. Prof. Overton has been identified with history, especially railroad history for many years, furthermore he is the author of "Burlington West," and I believe that all of us will welcome his opinions of this recent book.

## DURANGO

"In Durango, In Durango  
The Spaniards did fandango;  
In Durango, In Durango,  
Where the sun goes down at noon!"

*Powder River Jack Lee.*

The Spaniards no longer dance the Fandango in Southwest Colorado, as they doubtless did to the scandal of good Father Escalante when he arrived there in 1776. Even the later frontier significance of "fandango house" has largely disappeared in the west, although love stores and houses of mirth have by no means themselves disappeared from the lustier communities. Nor does the sun in actual fact go down at noon, although it does set uncommonly early over the tall chimney of the Smelter. The whiskered balladier, however, caught some of the essence of Durango in that he reported it to be a gaudy and altogether unusual city. It was these things and still is.

The list of cities in the United States which have come into being and prospered through the absolute fiat of the railroad is a long and impressive tally. So, for that matter, is the list of communities that have languished and perished altogether from its neglect. None more arrestingly illustrates this circumstance than Durango.

Before the coming of the railroad, southwestern Colorado, while never to this day to be described as populous, had been enthusiastically prospected and gold mining and cattle grazing flourished amazingly. Animas City, five miles north of the present site of Durango on the Silverton Road, was something of a township in the Ute Territory back in the leadership of two braves fascinatingly named Wanzitz and Honko, in the early seventies, but when the Rio Grande Railroad, in 1880, decided that a branch between Alamosa and Silverton was practicable, Durango came into being as a railroad town pure and simple. Its first sign of emergent greatness was when, on May 1, 1880, the Bank of San Juan decided to open a branch there. Six months later *The Durango Record* reported in its news column: "All of Animas City is coming to Durango as fast as accommodations can be secured. Even 'The Animas City Southwest' is coming despite its small opinion of our dimensions. It will move down sometime next week."

Durango was born amid gunfire and the usual frontier excitements of the times and its being was orchestrated to the exhaust of the narrow gage stacks of the Rio Grande's little locomotives pushing the end of track ever north, south and westward. Sixty-five years later it is still the narrow gage capital of the world and narrow gage trains still converge upon it from the four points of the compass over the iron of the Rio Grande Southern and the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroads. The only

remaining narrow gage luxury train in North America, the San Juan, plies daily between Alamosa and Durango. The Silverton train for freight and passengers runs twice a week above the incredible abyss of the Rio de las Animas Perdidas. Trains are dispatched to Farmington, New Mexico, three hour's run to the south, as the seasonal freight necessitates, and double-headed freights over the Rio Grande Southern head west for Dolores and the Silver San Juan at all hours. The spirit of Otto Mears, who built the amazing toll roads and later the little railroads, still completely dominates the imagination of the San Juan and to this day old-timers occasionally swear "by the Lord God and Otto." Mears came very close to being God himself in the old days.

For the amateur of railroading, Durango is possessed of unusual fascinations because it parallels in miniature and with perfect fidelity the pattern which makes railroad metropolises of Chicago and St. Louis, Memphis, Kansas City, Atlanta and Birmingham. From each of the points of the compass the light iron of the narrow gage converges upon its geographic entity and the trains run in to be broken up and sorted, made up into new trains and dispatched again from its yards toward their several destinations as dancers converge and recede in the pattern of a dance. In Durango the vast preponderance of its freight derives from the north, south and west and is carried out over the main line to Alamosa as tributaries drain a specific region and feed their commingled waters into a single parent stream. In reverse manner the incoming commodities, empties and passenger traffic are siphoned in from the standard gage trunk lines of eastern Colorado and distributed over the trefoil design of the Farmington and Silverton branches and the westernizing rails of the Southern. In microcosm and without benefit of belt lines Durango fills the identical function of any larger and more impressive rail center, and in its transport simplicities the student may see a simulacrum of mightier traffickings and commerces.

To understand the dramatic picture of Colorado railroading it must be understood that when, in the early seventies, General William Jackson Palmer was occupied with the building of what was eventually to become the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad system, the iron viaduct was only an incident in the creation of a great industrial and agricultural empire. In Palmer's mind were visions of vast metropolises animate with productive people and connecting and interlocking with them a railroad that should bring raw material to his manufactories, fuel to his foundries, food to the workers, and redistribute the products of forge and factory. In 1871 he had organized the Colorado Coal and Iron Company. As a mere incident to its creation he brought into being the entire community of South Pueblo, known for a time as Bessemer, and started using in his furnaces coal from the mines of Trinidad and iron ore from the mines of Orient in the San Luis Valley. By 1878 the Rio Grande's narrow gage had reached across the Sangre de Cristo Mountains from Walsenburg to Alamosa by way of La Veta Pass, and it was obvious that a continuation of the through iron from Alamosa to Silverton was in order. So Durango, like Pueblo, Colorado Springs and Trinidad came into fiat being as a necessity of the all possessive, all powerful railroad.

All of this ever-expanding pattern of iron and steel was tracked to

the three foot gage which was then in railroading vogue all over the United States. Not until 1881 was a standard gage rail added to the line from Denver to Pueblo and it was several years again before the 4' 8½" iron reached to Alamosa. There it stopped and from that day to this has never extended farther west into the San Juan. The narrow gage is not exactly a heritage from the seventies: it is the original article just as it was first evolved. The one exception to this rule in southwestern Colorado was the forty-nine miles of the Rio Grande's Durango-Farmington branch which, as is detailed elsewhere in this article, was originally laid in standard gage and, paradoxically, converted to narrow proportions almost twenty years later!

End of track reached Alamosa on July 10, 1878, milepost 247 from Denver, and early in 1879 General Paimers' engineers set about running the rails through to Durango and Silverton. Three routes were originally surveyed; one up the South Fork Pass to the San Juan River; one to the head waters of the Rio Grande and across the mountains above Cunningham Pass to the Animas, and one west from the Conejos River through the Cumbres Pass. The last of these was selected and the work of grading from Alamosa to Chama was completed by the last day of December 1880. The entire 200 miles from Alamosa to Durango, through Toltec Gorge, across the Continental Divide and through the Cumbres was finished July 27, 1881.

The railroad came into Durango with whoop and holler. The first piano had already arrived in February, the proud possession of Mrs. C. W. Williams, and had had to be carried in from Bear Creek, the then terminus of the railroad, by mule team.\* At the Williams home at Railroad and C Streets, it was a source of outrageous satisfaction and it is pleasant to think of the gratification so simply given to the music hungry pioneers. The San Juan and New York Smelter, named obviously in the order of communal importance, too, had recently been completed, and for the occasion the piano was lovingly trucked to the Smelter which was the only premises vast enough to accommodate five hundred people. For days in advance the town's leading musical confraternity, the Durango Band, had been practicing, and to augment its tumults there was specially imported from Clear Creek the renowned virtuosi of the Terrible Mine. This congress of artists was widely and unfavorably known as the Terrible Silver Cornet Band and few golden spike ceremonies, chowder and marching society foregatherings or rope walk dedications of the period were complete without its presence. It was no secret that feeling between the local practitioners on the cornet-au-piston and the imported performers on the French horn was running high. Finally it was settled

\* The first piano was an epochal event in many a community in the old west, a sort of date or landmark on which to base the calendar of local time. Amateurs of these pleasant legends of yesterday may read a detailed account of the arrival of the first piano in all the vast stretch of territory between Las Vegas and the Staked Plains, the piano of Mrs. Susan Hummer McSween in Lincoln, New Mexico, in "The Saga of Billy the Kid" by Walter Noble Burns. "The coming of the piano was the most exciting news Lincoln had had since the Horrel boys shot up the town. The remote mountain village had only a vague knowledge of pianos, based chiefly on pictures in infrequent newspapers and the hearsay evidence of such citizens as had made the grand tour to Santa Fe. . . . Lincoln took its pioneer piano to its heart. The instrument was a civic achievement and shed a certain metropolitan lustre on the community."



that the Durango Band should play "Hail To The Chief" when Governor Pitkin made his state entry, while the tootlers of the Terrible Band were to inaugurate the grand march with "The World Turned Upside Down."

The great day arrived as scheduled which, unhappily, was more than could be said for the special train which was bringing the guests of honor. The truth of the matter was that the special out of Denver had encountered difficulty in the form of sinking tracks a few miles out of Alamosa and at numerous points the excursionists had found it more conducive to their peace of mind to get down from the cars and walk while Engineer Hoag piloted the empty coaches across the dangerous places. In the interim the Terrible Silver Cornet Band repaired to the Nose Paint Saloon for further practice of their selections, Mayor Pennington postponed the parade to the Race Track until afternoon and a large and interested delegation of miners from Silverton visited the home of John and Ella Pearson, whose infant daughter, the first child born in Durango, was a source of wonder and solicitude for miles around. Her birth attracted a large number of gifts, including a horse and two building lots, and the event had been chronicled with profuse illustrations by *The Police Gazette* in far off New York City. The infant Pearson, the New York Smelter, the Hanging Tree and the three rival barber shops all enjoying a flourishing trade at the same time were the institutional wonders of the new metropolis and not on any count to be missed.

At six o'clock a joyous tooting sound accompanied by what was correctly interpreted by experts among the auditors to be the firing of Colt's 44 calibre Navy revolvers in a mood of jubilation were heard down the tracks and it was apparent that the great moment had actually arrived. The assorted woodwinds and French horns of the Cornet Band emerged hastily from the premises of the Nose Paint; Mayor Pennington gave his official silk hat a final and professional whirl for polish, a gesture of accomplished elegance which had endeared him to his electorate and which he was popularly reputed to have learned from a genuine English nobleman in the bar of the Windsor Hotel in Denver; the good ladies of the town rekindled the fires of the barbecue pits, and the most magnificent occasion in the history of Durango and one remembered to this very day was under way.

The ceremonies were opened by Mayor J. L. Pennington, who introduced Governor Pitkin. Ex-governor Gilpin, temporarily retired but hopeful of a return engagement, leapt gallantly to his feet to lead the cheering. The members of the Durango No. 1 Hose beat their red shirted breasts manfully, both bands, forgetting protocol, burst into tune, one with the Anvil Chorus from *Il Trovatore*, the other with the National Anthem. The citizenry was deafened and enchanted at once. Somebody got a leg in the barrel of San Juan Sangaree provided by the committee and had to be removed from the Race Track and a great deal of discharging of pistols testified to the delight of the mining contingent. The barbecue for the hungry pilgrims was an unqualified success and consisted of five whole oxen and a dozen sheep besides two wagon loads of fresh bread and four barrels of coffee!

Then there was the dinner and reception at Thomas Rockwood's Grand Central Hotel! Speech followed speech and enthusiasm mounted to fever



pitch as Mayor Sopris of Denver toasted "the cities of Colorado, the oldest and the newest," as Mayor Dougan of Leadville extended the hand of friendship to all Durango with magnificent oratory, as ex-Governor Evans, ex-Governor Hunt and General Palmer himself made brief but masterful speeches, and as toasts and responses of the most flattering sort passed to and fro as the wine diminished in the crystal decanters. "The San Juan Country" was proposed by M. J. McKenna, a wealthy mine owner from Moline, Illinois; "The mining and smelting interests" brought J. A. Porter, manager of the Smelter to his feet; J. F. Waters of Rico proposed the health of "the narrow gage engineers" which was drunk with terrific enthusiasm. A miner from Telluride fell downstairs in a most ungenteel manner and had to be removed. The reporter from the *Denver Daily Republican* asked a colleague how to spell *Chateau Y'Quem*.

And after that was the ball at the Smelter! That was the best fun of all. Never had so many ex-governors, generals, rich bankers, eastern capitalists and noted statesmen spun and whirled and pranced with the flower of frontier womanhood! Never had the San Juan beheld such an opulence of broadcloth tailcoats and such yards of satin and brocade in the latest, or at least only a very few months old, Paris styles! Supper was served in continuous relays from eleven o'clock till four in the morning and then it continued to be served in the guise of breakfast. All the most substantial citizens were there: Alfred P. Camp, President of the First National, G. Blake Garrison, also a banker of prominence, John Elitch, the Second Avenue restaurateur who was later to become world famous as proprietor of Elitch's Gardens in Denver, James Luttrell, the town agent, Parson Hoge, the local man of the cloth and, of course, all the respected ranchers and their wives from the Animas Valley: Freeds, Aspaas, Trippes, Trimbles, Fassbinders, Idles, Pinkertons and Kerrs. The reels and lancers were hilarious. A shameless cowboy who had been making frequent trips to the wine room of the Coliseum around the corner shot out one of the coal oil lamps and had to be removed. Joe Magnus, star reporter for Mrs. Romney's *Durango Record* asked a professional colleague how, please, to spell *mousseline de soie*!

It was several days before Durango recovered from the great Smelter Ball and it has been remembered ever since with wonder and delight.

The construction of the railroad into the San Juan country and its eventual operation between Durango and the east was the occasion, as railroads have been the occasion elsewhere, of a sudden and dramatic increase in the tempo of civic tumults. Almost overnight the name Durango became the hallmark of authentic frontier doings of a violent and lawless nature; rough characters abounded; gunplay was the order of the day; firearms were in universal requisition and justice, when it obtained, was apt to be without benefit of legal formality. Even to this day the name of Durango carries with it an implication of wild west spaciousness and as recently as 1945 a character in a raffish cinema serial of hairbreadth escapes and hard riding flourished under the name of "The Durango Kid."

In the early eighties extra-legal executions were so frequent at the "Hanging Tree" as to come to be regarded as a sort of lower case red letter date in the communal calendar, and when Durango's one and only

orthodox necktie party was sanctioned by judge and ordained by jury the occasion became celebrated in history as "The Great Legal Hanging." The railroad brought in scores of picaresque scoundrels, and conductors and train crews were armed as a matter of course.

Second only to the Rio Grande in the imagination of Durango in the eighties was the Bank of San Juan which later became the First National Bank.\* Tangible currency had about it in those times no least savor of economic suspicion and its possession, actual and potential, occupied a good deal of people's waking thoughts. The original banking structure was happily located at G and Railroad Streets, within convenient distance of the town's most important institutions: the depot, the Hanging Tree and the Nose Paint Saloon. An all time record was established when a trigger happy bad man descended from a Rio Grande Pullman, investigated the resources of the Nose Paint, shot up the bank and was hanged from The Tree all within three hours. Such economy of motion was universally admired even in an age innocent of the production line.

Incoming travellers were apt to get a gaudy first impression of the community. "The first train came into Durango in August 1881, and in September mother and I came in," recalled Mrs. John Haggart, sixty-five years later. "The trip from Denver was thrilling and our arrival was quite exciting, too, for there had been a shooting scrape ten minutes before the train arrived and we were hustled into a big omnibus and driven away immediately."

So tumultuous, indeed, were the early eighties in Durango that Denver and Silverton papers maintained staff correspondents there to cover the warfare which raged almost continually in its streets and saloons. The following dispatch to the *La Plata Miner* in the year of the railroad's arrival is typical of the newswriting of the times.

## DURANGO

### "The Field of the Cloth of Gore"

#### ACCIDENTAL KILLING — MURDER AND LYNCHING

##### List of Killed and Wounded

The *Record* of the 9th brings the news of the accidental killing of a man named Reuben Bertram, aged 30 years, who belonged to the water service of the D & R. G. construction company. The shot which is said to have been a stray, struck Bertram in the thigh severing an artery, from the effects of which the man died in ten minutes. The same shot also wounded a man named Lovell, in the shin, who was occupying the same bed with Bertram. This killing occurred near La Count's camp in El Margre canyon.

\* In point of fact the first real bank of Durango was even less formal than Mr. Camp's. When honest citizens had reason to believe rough characters were contemplating armed descent on the community, in the days before the First National, a favored repository for their valuables had been the bellows in the forge which was part of Jackson's Hardware Store.

Last Sunday morning the ball opened in earnest at Durango, the cutthroats, pimps, thieves and murderers had a festival in the small hours of the morning, followed by a picnic by the vigilantes in the evening. The *Record Extra* of Monday morning tells the sad, sad story. Just at the commencement of the dance which takes place at the dance house, just after the nigger show is over, a disturbance occurred on the sidewalk which was created by a Henry R. Moorman. The officers quieted the disturbance and supposing all trouble over they relaxed their guard. Moorman, watching his opportunity, pulled his pistol from his pocket and entered the dance hall, with the remark that he was going to kill somebody, and immediately began blazing away. The bullet had the usual effect of a Durango bullet, hitting two men. The first man struck, Perry Steffee, was only slightly wounded in the arm, the ball then glancing and doing its deadly work upon a poor innocent miner named J. F. Polk Prindle, who was struck in the abdomen, the ball passing through his body and lodging in his hip. Mr. Prindle exclaimed, "you've shot the wrong man pard," and toppled over. He was assisted to the table by the bystanders, and expired in twenty minutes. Henry R. Moorman, was a large man fully six feet tall. He went to Durango last January from Lake City, where he formerly drove stage for Barlow & Sanderson. He has been the hero of several "gun plays" recently and has been reported wounded and killed several times. Mr. W. Marshal, one of the proprietors of the dance house where four murders have occurred and as many persons have been seriously wounded, offered \$100 reward for the murderer. T. R. Payton and two other men started in pursuit, and captured their man in a lumber yard. The officer got the drop on him with a double barrelled shot gun when the cowardly murderer surrendered. He was placed in jail together with a man named Watts who was captured with him.

### THE PICNIC

At eleven o'clock Sunday evening two shots were fired which was the signal of the vigilantes who to the number of 300 turned out promptly and proceeded to the lock-up and overpowered the guards, secured the prisoner and proceeded to the pine tree in front of the postoffice, where he was promptly hung with neatness and dispatch. When the body had hung fifteen minutes the Superintendent of the picnickers announced that any person who should cut down the body before daylight would do so under penalty of death. No one was disposed to cut it down, so it remained until morning swaying to and fro in the breeze, as a warning to the many other thieves and murderers that infest the town of Durango, to the terror of all well disposed citizens. The murdered man, J. K. Polk Prindle, was an old miner in Colorado and had resided for several years at Georgetown and Central City. He prospected through the Gunnison country last season and came to Durango in January. His funeral took place in Durango on Monday.

At approximately the same date as this weekend of more or less personal violence, the *La Plata Miner's* war correspondent reported to his editor on the communal warfare which was being waged unceasingly between the outlaw night riders of Farmington and its neighboring community to the north.

### LATEST FROM THE FRONT

#### The Battle at Durango on Monday

The Farmington light cavalry brigade under General Cox, advanced up the Animas on Sunday last, and arrived at Durango just about the time the entertainment given by the committee of safety was at its height and, in view of the fact of the large number of people on the streets, Gen. Cox's command did not

attack the forces under General Stockton, but passed on to Animas City where they camped on their arms for the night. Monday about ten o'clock General Cox's command broke camp and made an effort to gain a vantage position on the mesa covering the town of Durango. As the forces under General Cox, numbering forty to fifty were crossing the mesa, they were attacked by Gen. Stockton, who with Col. Garrett on the left and Col. Eskridge on the right, are said to have made the most brilliant charge on record. The fire was returned by Gen. Cox's forces and about 100 shots exchanged. The shots fell thick and fast in the town of Durango, and two men, disinterested parties, were wounded. The wounded were Conrad Pulvermiller, in the calf of the leg, quite seriously, and Henry Wilson in the hand slightly. General Cox's command fell back in good order followed by the forces under General Stockton. The Durango war correspondent of the MINER occupied a commanding position on the heights west of Durango. The troops on both sides conducted themselves with astonishing bravery under fire, and their movements gave evidence of the superior military skill of their respective commanders. Nightfall on Monday caused a cessation of hostilities for the day.

Amidst all these excursions and the burning of powder there was also the great feud between John Curry's *La Plata Miner* and the Rio Grande Railroad, an editorial vendetta whose origins are lost in the mists but which continued until long after the trains were actually running up the Animas and into Silverton. Comparable on a minor scale to the later verbal fisticuffs between the *San Francisco Examiner* and the Central Pacific Railroad, neither side pulled any punches and the cause of the railroad was cheerfully and profanely espoused by the *San Juan Herald*. In a day when the heavy editorializing of news was almost universal, the *Miner* was able to work itself into a splendid pro-bono-public rage in 1881 when a savage wreck marked the early operations of the road between Alamosa and Durango.

## **TERRIBLE RAILROAD ACCIDENT ON CONEJOS RANGE**

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**Criminal Liability of the D. & R. G. Railway Company**

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**THE "MINER" WARNED THE PUBLIC OF THE UNSAFE  
CONDITION OF THE ROAD WEEKS AGO**

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**Eight Persons Killed and Six Seriously Wounded**

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The MINER from week to week since the first of March has continued to warn the public of the unsafe condition of the San Juan extension of the D. & R. G. Railroad. This road is now and has been for months in a dangerous condition for miles and miles, and the railroad and stage company that will endanger the life

of the people and traveling public by trying to get them to travel over the road in its present condition, should be made to pay heavily for the injuries they are responsible for and the loss of life that must occur. The officers of such railroad company and stage line should be prosecuted criminally as accessors to murder before the fact. Mr. E. M. House, of the San Juan County Bank, and Captain W. S. Walker, of the Walker House, Silverton, were on the train from Pueblo to Alamosa, but they, having read and heeded the warning to the traveling public through the MINER, got off the train at Alamosa and came in via Del Norte and Antelope Park, and they say they can give LA PLATA MINER credit for their lives. In this connection, we wish to continue the warning to the public. We learn from parties, who have come over the road recently, that there is hardly a day that the train does not run off the track from three to seven times in crossing the Conejos range, and that fifteen miles of the track will have to be taken up and run through a rolling mill before a train can be run over it in safety, there being hardly a rail in fifteen miles that is not twisted out of all shape. The following from the *Denver Republican*, of the 25th, gives the latest from the accident. That paper says:

"The names of the wounded who reached here are Z. F. Maxey, G. R. Page, and two brothers, D. Rand and A. F. Brewer. Maxey was driven to the Lindell Hotel, West Denver, where he had previously boarded and the other three to the Ladies Relief Hospital. Last evening, a reporter called upon Mr. Maxey to obtain his story regarding the accident. He said: 'The train consisted of only two cars — the coach we were in, and a caboose. There were sixteen of us in the coach — fifteen men and a woman, and six men in the caboose, principally railroad men. We were about two miles west of Toltec tunnel, and thirty-two miles from Antonito, and were running along at a speed of perhaps fifteen miles an hour, when suddenly our coach left the track, jumping along from tie to tie for probably two car lengths. Every passenger was instantly upon his feet, and all made a rush for the door, but no one succeeded in getting out. The car at first seemed to be leaning inward toward the mountains, but then suddenly changed and went off the track. Not a passenger said a word, and all looked aghast, and clung to car seats or anything they could reach for support. The coach made a complete revolution. Some of the passengers were rendered insensible. I retained my hold of the car seat, and made an attempt to get out. On the fourth revolution of the car I was struck on the head and rendered unconscious. The next thing I knew I was on the ground, and the car, or what little remained of it, was about fifty feet below me. About five feet below me was a man lying dead, with the car trucks on him. To my left was another standing on his head, between two rocks, his head crushed. To my right was a fellow passenger, very little hurt. Shrieks of the wounded and dying were heard below, but I could not go to them, I was so faint. The train men did everything possible. The engine was sent to Osier, and soon returned with section men and a flat car. Eight of us wounded were placed on the car and taken to Osier. The car then returned and brought in the dead.

"Here we remained but a short time, and were then taken to Antonito. We left on a special train at 4 o'clock Saturday afternoon, and reached Denver at 8 this morning. George Inman, who had his leg broken, was left at Fort Garland. The cause of the accident, I think, was a washout, allowing the rails to spread. The car was completely demolished. It must have rolled two hundred feet. The woman was killed but where she was found I do not know.'

"The reporter also had a conversation with Mr. B. F. Blythe, who was in the caboose. He said: 'When the coach left the track I jumped from the caboose and saw the coach from the time it started until it struck a tree, about 150 feet below. It was a sight never to be forgotten. Our hearts stood still. We hurried after the car and found five persons dead, and all the rest more or less injured. None escaped.'"

To this and similar gestures of embattled hostility in the *Miner*, the *Herald* replied tartly that accidents would happen and that in any event the advent of the railroad into Silverton (where, in fact, it arrived the following year) was so inestimable an asset as to render opposition to it not only malicious but positively criminal.

"The impression prevails abroad, and it is the correct one," thundered "*The Herald*," "that Silverton is only awaiting for railroad facilities for the camp to boom, and now that we are on the eve, as it were, of enjoying these privileges, a newspaper claiming to be the representative organ of southwestern Colorado, and withal the 'pioneer journal,' of this section, assumes to voice the sentiments of the people of this region by coming out in a four or five column tirade against the railroad arriving in Silverton, on general principles, and denouncing individually and collectively the directors of the D. & R. G. 'road, as a band of thieves and pick-pockets, and the whole corporation as rotten to the core and gigantic swindle in toto. Regarding any personal spite that may have given rise to this bitter opposition to the D. & R. G.'s San Juan extension, etc., we have nothing to say. It is no funeral of ours. We desire simply to correct the impression which is likely to be created regarding the feeling of the people of Silverton and San Juan county touching the extension of the railroad to this place. To say that the majority of our citizens generally do not want the railroad is to state a falsehood. To assert that our section will not be immensely benefited and a new impetus given to all of our industries, is to show an exhibition of ignorance or malice finding but few parallels in selfish antagonism. The people DO want the railroad and they will have it too, and up the Animas canyon at that."

To such skirmishes among the ink pots and the heady insults of the editors the populace of the San Juan reacted as the audience at a championship boxfight. If the *Miner* denounced the railroad as an octopus in the later manner of Ambrose Bierce, the teamsters and stage drivers in the Anesie's taproom roared their approval. If the *Herald* drove home a prodigious editorial wallop at the *Miner* the enchanted mine owners and cattle ranchers in the Imperial Cafe across the way in Green Street signified their approval by plying the editor with gratuitous strong waters until it was deemed advisable to send him home on a shutter, appropriated from the premises for this purpose.

For a full decade from the time the construction gangs passed on up the Animas the railroad record in Durango was characterized by more or less tranquility, even if as much might not be said for the community itself. From 1881 to 1891 the little trains with their passenger traffic in gunmen and ranchers, miners, commercial travellers, gamblers, bankers and eastern tourists puffed back and forth in their orderly pattern of their going between the "metropolis of the southwest" and Silverton on the north and Alamosa and Denver on the east. Ten wheelers with diamond stacks and Americans with huge wedge plows fixed to their pilot beams in winter wheeled their tonnage down the Animas and over the Cumbres, concentrates from the Water Witch Mine, the Great Republic, the Empire, the Hercules and Grand Central. When snow fell heavily in Toltec Gorge it sometimes required six panting engines to push the plows up to the snowsheds at Cumbres.

Most of the engines on the narrow gage roster of motive power in those years came from Baldwin: the Silverton, the Ruxton, the Colonel Greenwood, the Governor Bent, the Uncle Sam, the Trinidad and the Galena,



the last of which was erected by Porter-Bell. A number of others were built by Grant: the Antelope, the Crested Buttes, the Animas Forks, the Red Cliff, the Mt. Shavano. Some of these beautiful engines were not scrapped until the late thirties. Mostly they were ten wheelers with diamond or capped stacks, enormous coal oil headlights and prominent brass whistles on top of substantial sand domes. One narrow gage engine on the Durango run, the Salida, had its engine bed widened and became one of the first standard gage locomotives on the system.

In December, 1891, almost precisely ten years after the Smelter Ball, Durango celebrated another railroad milestone: the arrival of the Rio Grande Southern. Unable to penetrate the last twelve miles of mountain between Silverton and Ouray, the unconquerable Otto Mears had built 162 miles of narrow gage from Ridgeway to Durango by way of Dallas Divide, Vance Junction, Lizard Head, Rico and Dolores. On December 20 a double header with two Baldwin ten wheelers awash with flags and bunting on the head end of twenty cars of coal from the Porter Mine in Rico rolled in from Mancos and Hesperus, and Durango became the capital of the narrow gage world, a title it has maintained ever since.

Although there may be no connection between the advent of another railroad and the circumstance, it is notable that less than a year later Durango was selected by the managers of the Keeley Institute as the ideal site for a branch of their celebrated cure.

"Although but two months in existence," triumphantly proclaimed *The Solid Muldoon* of January 1, 1893, "it already numbers among its cured fifty patients representing all classes of people from the day laborer to the professional man. . . . Devoted to the cure of liquor, opium and tobacco habits . . . the floors are carpeted with rich stuffs, the furniture is elegant, the walls are lined with pictures of artistic merit, the club room is fitted with card tables and altogether the Institute is an attractive resort. It is doing a world of good here!"

It is pleasant to think of the professional men of the Durango nineties disassociating themselves from opium in such a setting.

Sixty-five years after the Smelter Ball, Durango has changed somewhat and has seen a lot, but the Southern and the Rio Grande are still the lifeblood of its being, the coming and going of their trains the systole and diastole of its heart. It is still, even by western standards, a tough, rough uninhibited town. Its saloons are frequent, its drinking habits are universal, continuous and of an order calculated to hearten and encourage those who fear for the rugged nature of the American west. Back in 1910 or thereabouts there was a trolley line running up main street and two miles into Animas City, but now that is gone. The First National Bank is still a pillar of the community, its president the son of the original Banker Camp. Its Strater Hotel, presided over by the gentle genius of "Miss Alice" (she has a last name and it is Baine, but nobody knows her as anything but "Miss Alice"), is an altogether admirable institution and its conduct and comfort would be a credit to many and many a more pretentious caravansary. Its chief barkeep, name of Bill, wears on his spacious bosom a gold Albert watch chain, which would chain up freight cars in an emergency, ornamented with a two ounce gold nugget from the Smuggler's Union Mine in Telluride.

Generally speaking the commerce of the railroads today is no longer the concentrates from the mines, but is concerned with agriculture and ranching. The ore cars are disappearing from the narrow gage and being replaced by stock cars and reefers. The urgent nature of such freight has speeded up operations both in the yards and on the long hauls across the mountains, and while fifty years ago a trainload of low grade ore might linger a week en route to the smelters at Leadville, today a shipment of white face steers must be run into the Denver stockyards in forty-eight hours.

The Rio Grande dispatcher at the depot marks up the call board for the next day each evening at six o'clock after he has consulted the Southern's chief delay upstairs. Both of them watch the barometer with an eagle eye, especially during the fall and winter months, and weather reports from Denver, Walsenburg and Pueblo are received at frequent interludes. Snow can form quickly in the high passes at Lizard Head and in the Cumbres and, although the brakemen working the Durango yards may be in shirt sleeves, the Silverton train will pull out with a huge wedge plow on the engine as precaution against slides in the cuts at Rockwood and Tacoma. Stock extras roll eastward double shotted all through the night after "sale days" at the stockyards, and smoke from the trim 0-8-0 switcher curls up at all hours into the rear bedrooms at the Strater, to the distress of Miss Alice but to the pleasure of railroad minded guests. About fifty per cent of the income of the entire San Juan region, according to the Chamber of Commerce, derives from the white face steers on its rich and ample ranges.

Tourist trade in the San Juan amounts to little despite the incredible wonders of its scenery and attractions of its climate. The Rio Grande Railroad has never promoted its territory and there is a widespread suspicion that it deliberately attempts to avoid passenger traffic in the hope, some unfortunate day, of losing it altogether. Once it ran tourist specials on the Silverton run, open cars jammed with railroad enthusiasts and wild-flower pickers, but they attracted too much publicity and, in the fear of a rush of passenger traffic, they were abandoned.

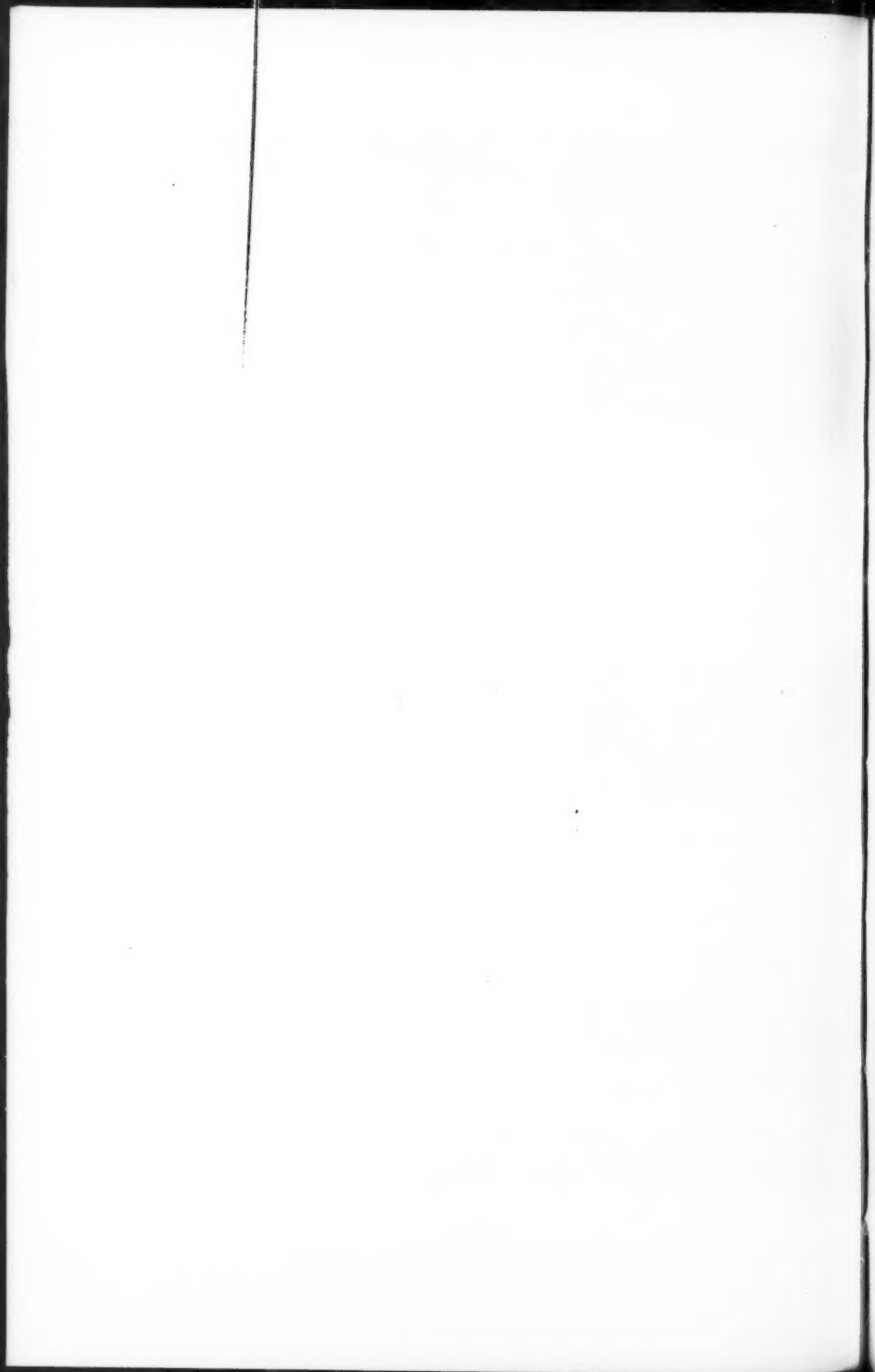
During the wars there was a considerable revival of mining at Telluride, Silverton and Ouray of vanadium and molybdenum as well as complex radioactive ores used in the manufacture of the atom bomb, but immediately upon the cessation of hostilities the normal traffic of the railroads reverted to cattle and garden truck. In the space of a few years the annual income from the bean crop alone in the Montezuma District, west of Durango, spiraled to more than \$2,000,000 to the dismay of the officers of the Rio Grande, who have always been hopeful of an excuse to scrap the Southern. Alfalfa, hay, corn, oats and potatoes overflowed the warehouses and elevators at Dolores, Cortez and Mancos and the angry voices of farmers and their elected legislators at first irritated and then terrified the railroad tycoons, in Denver. From abandonment the trend of their considerations has veered to the possibility of standard gaging the run from Alamosa into Durango.

Whatever befalls railroading in southwestern Colorado, the San Juan has known the most spectacular and romantic operations over the high iron that has ever been seen in North America. Even the Rio Grande's



own Royal Gorge and Moffat Routes are temperate excitements compared to the four foot wide ledge above the Rio de las Animas Perdidas, and the lonely reaches of the Tonopah and Goldfield in the lost lands of Nevada seem populous by comparison with the blizzard-swept uplands at Lizard Head and Trout Lake. Other great railroaders threw the iron of the Central Pacific across the High Sierras and surveyed the seemingly illimitable distances of the Dominion for the Canadian Pacific; there are elsewhere the staggering achievements of bridge-builders and mountain railroad pioneers; the geometric patterns of transcontinental main lines are perpetual monuments to Theodore Judah, Grenville Dodge, General Palmer, Henry Flagler and many, many men.

Of them all, however, Otto Mears is master and the Rio Grande Southern is his masterpiece. Of them all only Otto Mears was and is incomparable.

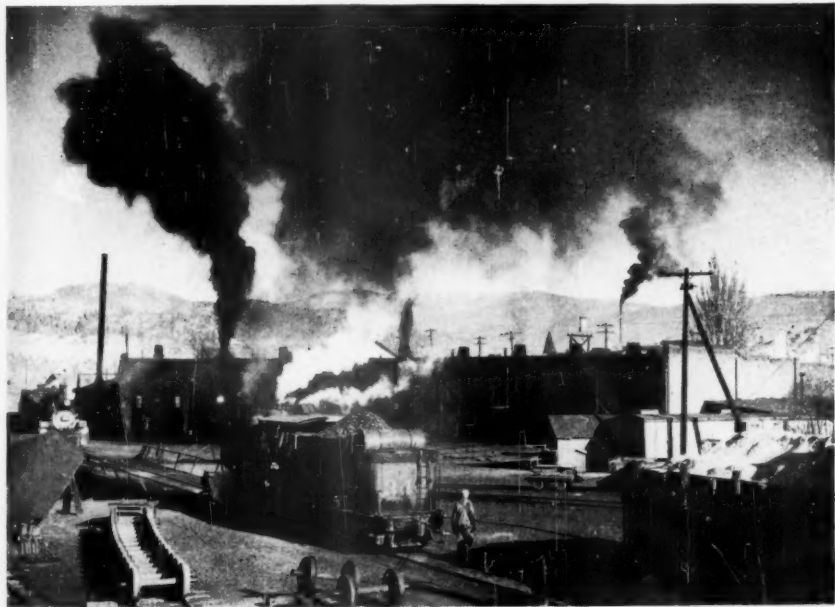




DEPOT AT DURANGO

*C. M. Clegg photo.*

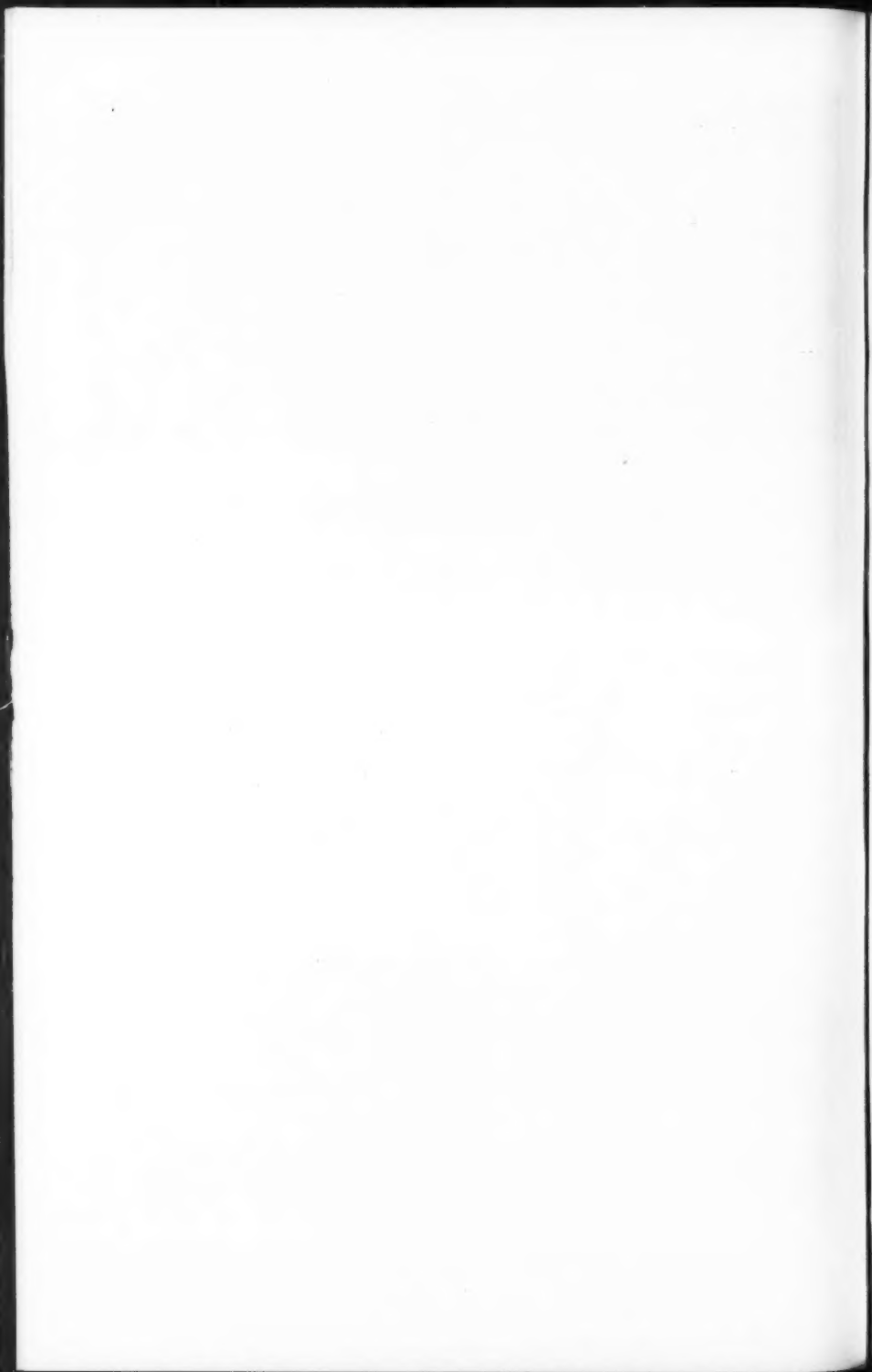
The depot at Durango, Colorado, is used jointly by the Rio Grande Southern and the narrow gage division of the Denver and Rio Grande Western. The Southern's dispatcher's office on the second floor controls the entire road and is liberally equipped with barometers and teletypes from the government weather agencies as sudden storms at all seasons make mountain railroading a hazardous undertaking.



DAWN IN DURANGO

*C. M. Clegg photo.*

The narrow gage round house and shops shared by the Denver and Rio Grande Western and the Rio Grande Southern come to life at Durango, Colorado, at the beginning of a new day.





*Collection of A. M. Camp.*

#### THE LAW IN DURANGO

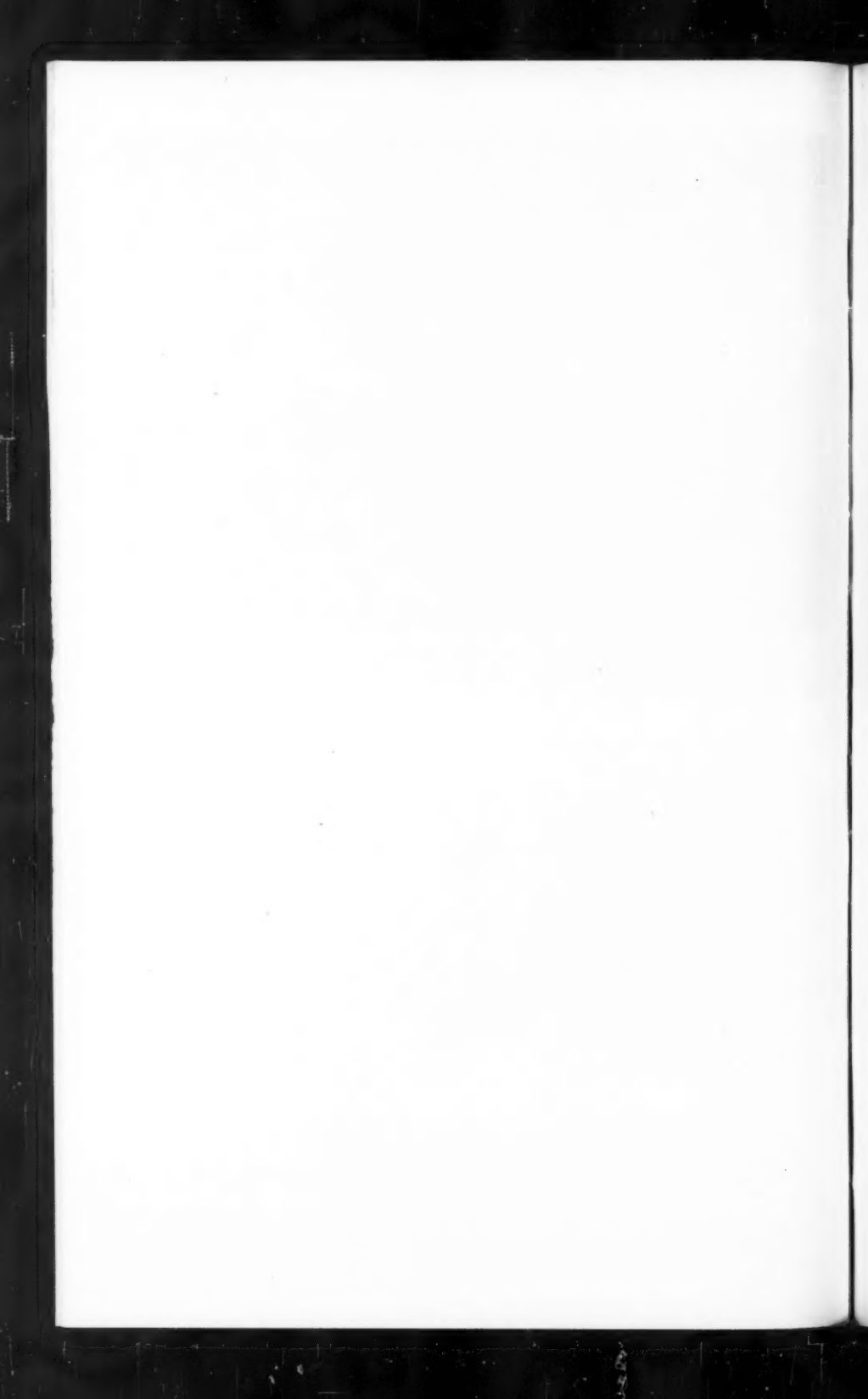
Although hangings were the merest commonplace from Durango's "Hanging Tree" in the eighties, the only legal execution ever held there created enormous excitement so that schools were let out and the saloons filled to capacity. A miner named Bill Woods rudely murdered another customer in Charlie Dustin's saloon and his hanging was carried out with all legal solemnity. The Rio Grande freight shed may be seen in the background as the town livery stable hearse (left) waits for a customer.



*Collection of Doris Wilson.*

#### DURANGO HAD A TROLLEY LINE

In 1910 the main street of Durango, Colorado, boasted a single trolley track over which a single car ran back and forth to Animas City two miles up the road that is now the "Million Dollar Highway" to Ouray and Ridgeway. Today the trolley line is gone but Durango is still capital of the narrow gauge railroad world of the United States.





*C. M. Clegg photo.*

#### IN THE MEADOWS OF DURANGO

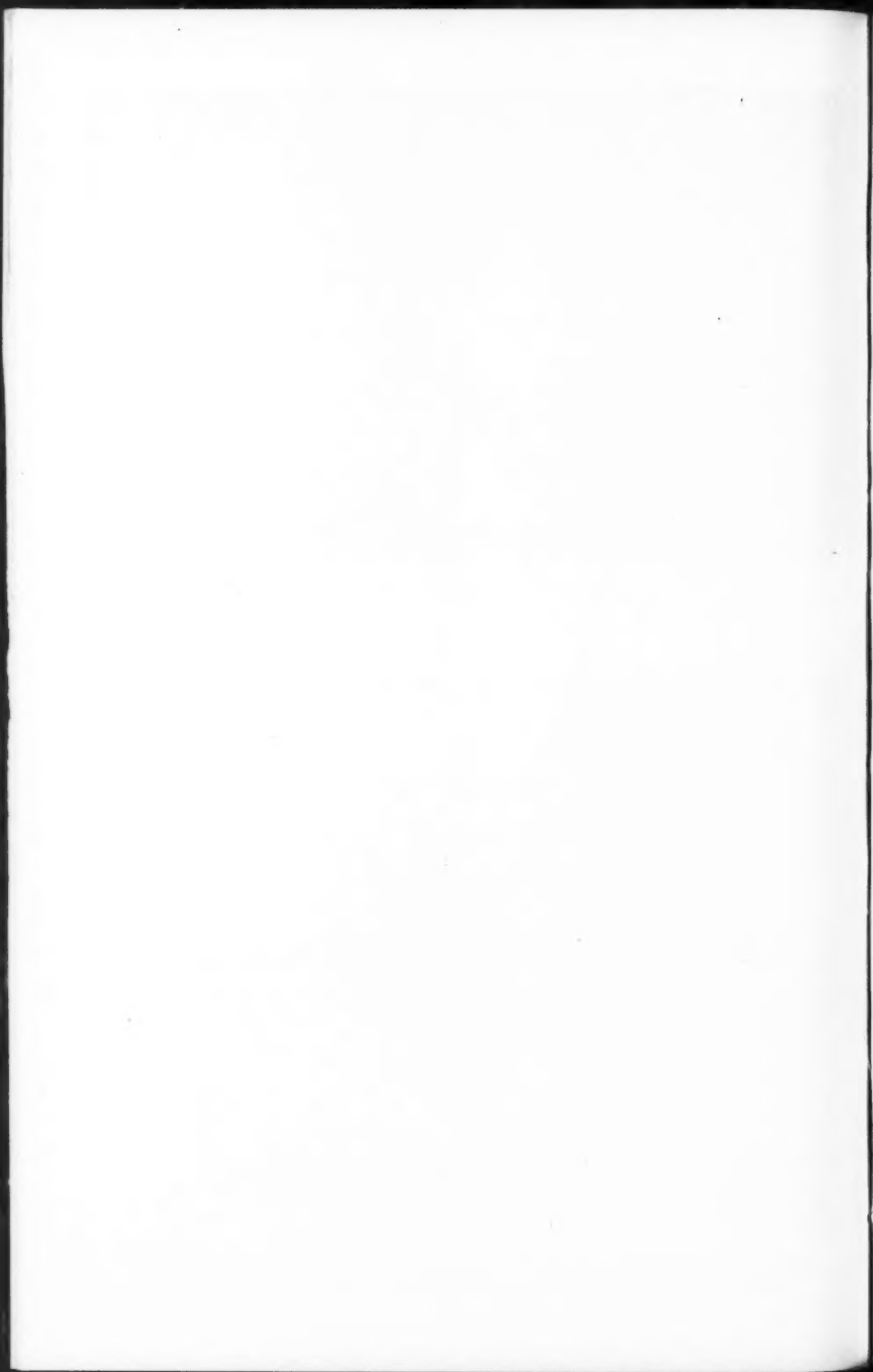
On a spring Saturday morning the Denver and Rio Grande Western's narrow gauge train to Silverton traverses a pastoral landscape a few miles north of Durango.



*Collection of A. M. Camp.*

#### ALL CHANGE TO MULE BACK

When, in the winter of 1905, the mixed train from Durango to Silverton could not get through because of the snow-fall in Animas Canyon, the train was turned on the wye at Elk Park and passengers who wished might hire a mule, several of which are visible at the left rear of the photograph, to continue to Silverton for the fee of a silver dollar.



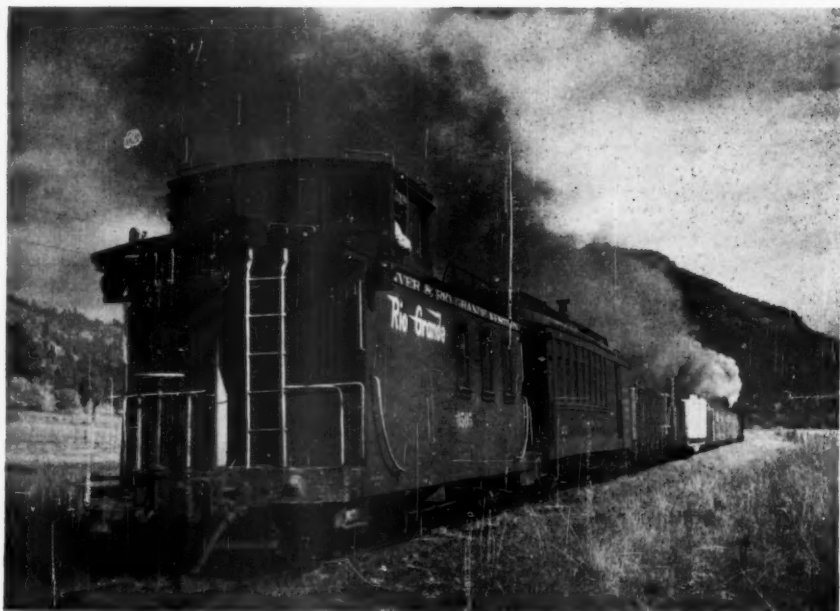




#### SNOWSLIDE ON THE ANIMAS

*Collection of A. M. Camp.*

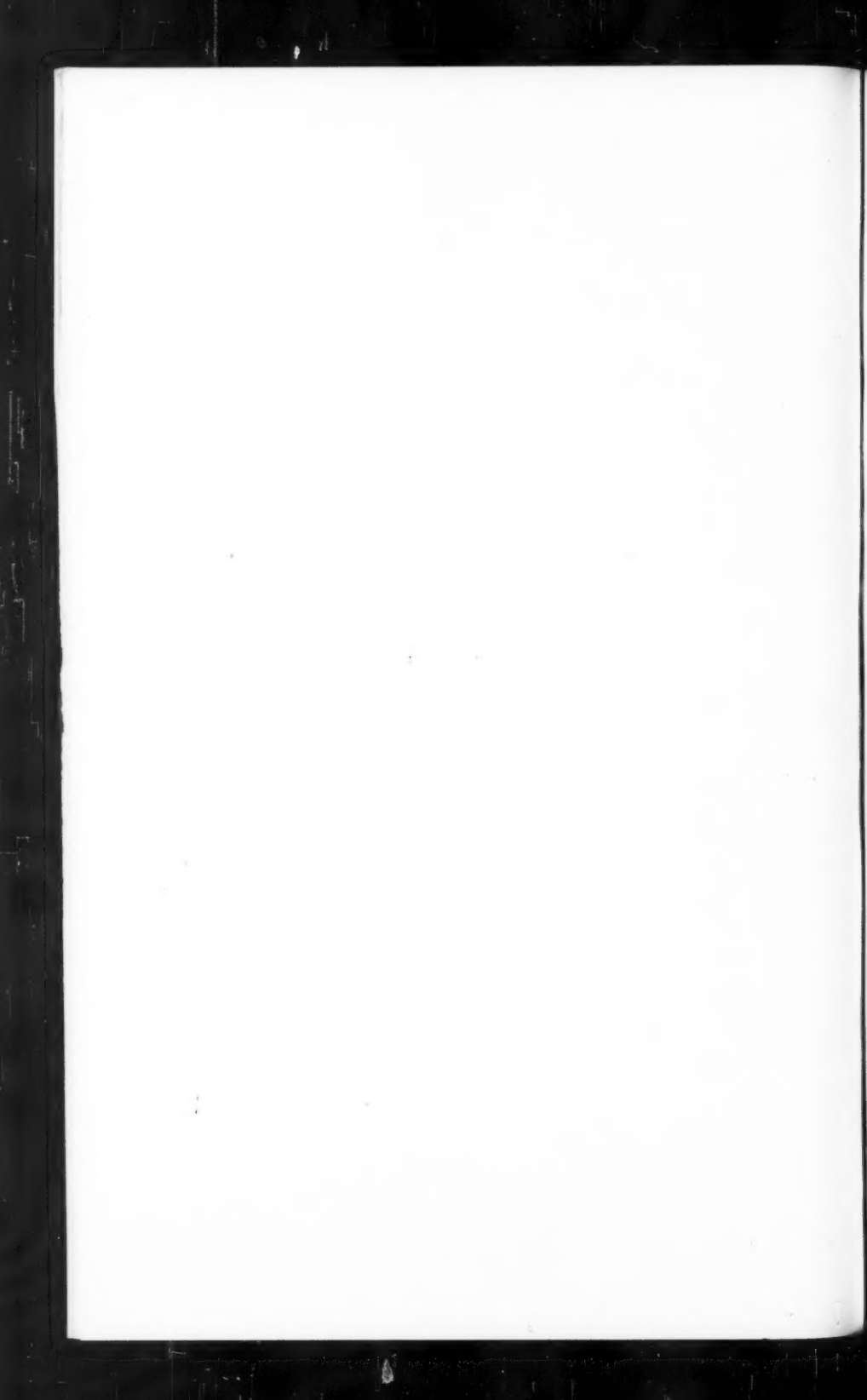
Near Cascade on the Silverton-Durango narrow gage line of the Rio Grande this snowslide in 1934 required steam shovels and blasting powder to free the rails.



#### HEADED FOR THE HILLS

*C. M. Clegg photo.*

The Denver and Rio Grande Western's mixed train Tuesday and Saturday morning between Durango and Silverton with ten narrow gage freight cars, the famous Silverton coach and a caboose, heads into the Animas Canyon at Hermosa, Colorado.



## TELLURIDE

To assert that the narrow gage Rio Grande Southern is one of the most completely remarkable railroads of the world is only to indulge an advised and considered generality. It is unique in several of its aspects and at all times spectacular beyond the average. It is one of the loneliest railroads anywhere. Its 162 miles of main line track connect terminals a scant sixty miles apart and it came into being because of the absolute impossibility of spanning only twelve of these miles with railroad iron. It provides the sole railroad service for more than 4000 square miles of almost incredibly wild and hostile territory. Its trackage from Vance Junction through Ophir and up to Lizard Head represents an achievement in railroad engineering and maintenance without parallel anywhere, and the story of its internal economy and finance suggests a corporation of fiction rather than an economic fact.

The Southern is a page out of yesterday, a bonanza railroad with its origins in heroic times when there were giants in the land, a monument to a race of timberline pioneers, swaggering millionaires and the days when 150 pounds of steam strained to capacity the staybolts in the back-heads of little ten wheelers from the erecting shops of Baldwin and Schenectady and Porter-Bell. In 1946 much of the glory had departed from the rails of the Southern. Gone were its brightly painted varnish hauls of two or three little cars to Rico, to Telluride, to Dolores. Gone, too, were the dividends of \$1.25 it paid on each of its 45,000 shares of stock even before construction was completed. Gone were the spacious days when terrapin and champagne were the veriest commonplace at the Sheridan Hotel in Telluride and the miners tossed minted double eagles onto the stage when the girls pleased them at the Nugget Theater.

The glory was gone. So was Otto Mears, who made it flower, but the railroad still functioned and the past hung about it, heavy, pervading, tangible in every rusting target switch and every abandoned siding corrupted with mountain weeds and buried with slides from the overhanging cuts.

Ironically, the Southern came into being because of the very carelessness and haste with which railroads were located and surveyed during boom times in Colorado. In 1889 the Rio Grande Western had completed its narrow gage branches from Durango north to Silverton and from Montrose south to Ouray. Twenty-eight miles over the summit of Red Mountain separated the ends of track, and between these Mears hoped within a few months to be operating his Silverton Railroad through the tortuous confines of Uncompaghere Canyon. His locating crews were working on Red Mountain trying to find and survey a possible route, but Mears himself was too busy with actual tracklaying out of Silverton to leave his grading and construction gangs. Finally, in June 1889, when only twelve miles separated the Silverton's graders from Ouray, Mears'

surveyers told him he was essaying the impossible. No railroad could ever be put through Uncompaghe Canyon and there was no alternate route around Red Mountain. He was licked.

Possibly Mears, who was an old hand at giving battle to the mountains, had foreseen some such contingency, although, in the face of his continued construction of the Silverton, this seems doubtful. In any event, by October of the same year the Rio Grande Southern was located and this time its survey was completed in advance and a company incorporated for its underwriting. By June of next year 1500 workmen were blasting cuts, building fills and carpentering trestles west and south out of Ridgeway and across Dallas Divide. By the end of the year revenue trains were operating in and out of Telluride and at the other end of the railroad coal trains were running into Durango from Coal Banks five miles west of the town.

For six miles south from Vance Junction, where the branch line runs up to Telluride, the iron of the Southern clings precariously to the cliffs which dominate the west side of the valley of the San Miguel. There, at Ophir, with breath-taking abruptness the valley ends in a rocky escarpment towering thousands of feet into the sky and cutting off the approach to the south as sharply as a closing valve cuts off the flow of water in a main. While at the other end of the line graders were laying track at the rate of nearly half a mile a day, it took Mears and his bridge gangs, powder men and construction squads six months to lay steel over the four miles which lift trains, by way of the world-famous Ophir Loop, up to the rim of the canyon and to Lizard Head. Four long trestles, a sequence of heavily ballasted fills and retaining walls and hazardous shelves made by blasting cuts out of the sheer granite of the cliffside hold the tracks from Ophir Depot up to the sweeping curves of Trout Lake. The railroad is a matchless triumph of imagination and daring and must have in some measure compensated Mears for his defeat almost within whistle blast of Ouray.

By the end of the year the Rio Grande Southern, already in profitable operation at its two terminals, was ready for through traffic and the *Denver Daily News* on December 20, 1891, carried the following telegraphic dispatch from the wintry San Juan:

## IN RAILWAY CIRCLES

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### Celebrations Being Observed in Durango Where the Rio Grande Southern is Now Completed

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Special to the *News*.

DURANGO, COLO., Dec. 19 — Tomorrow will be a day long remembered by the grateful people of the San Juan. It will be marked in the history of this entire section as a day of great importance to the commercial and mining interests of Southwestern Colorado. The last spike on the Rio Grande Southern will be driven tomorrow, and thus Rico, Telluride and Ridgeway will be united to the metropolis

of the Southwest. A double-header, drawing twenty cars of Durango coal from the Porter Mine, will leave Rico at 7 o'clock tomorrow morning. The train will be decorated appropriately and will make a through run.

The time table and schedules will be issued tomorrow and trains will be running regularly by Monday. The train that leaves here tomorrow will take fifty dressed turkeys and about three barrels of beer from the Durango brewery as a treat to the laborers on the track at the completion tomorrow. The citizens of Durango have planned a grand reception, ball and banquet to be given in Durango at an early date, when all the San Juan towns will join the celebration of the completion of the Rio Grande Southern Railroad.

Great was the rejoicing throughout the San Juan country. Nothing comparable to the Smelter Ball of 1881 is in the record to testify to the public appreciation of their new railroad, but such a boom of business was experienced that before it had been in full operation a month it had to refuse various shipments of merchandise by reason of insufficient motive power, and by spring so heavy had traffic been that thirty miles of thirty pound rail between Vance Junction and Rico had worn out and been replaced by heavier fifty-seven pound iron.

Otto Mears cast about him for suitable expression of the gratification he felt. It was an age of florid and expansive gestures and the prosperity of his road derived from the boons and usufructs of the Silver Purchase Act of 1890. Obviously something of silver was the thing and on December 27 the *Denver Daily News* again had tidings concerning the incomparable "Pathfinder of the San Juan."

## IN RAILWAY CIRCLES

### President Otto Mears Orders Five Hundred Silver Filigree Work Passes for His Silverton Road

Special to the *News*.

SANTA FE, N. M., Dec. 26 — Mr. S. Spitz, a filigree manufacturer here, today received from the Hon. Otto Mears, president of the Rio Grande Southern railroad, an order for 500 annual passes, to be manufactured of silver filigree. Last year President Mears sent each of the railway magnates of the country a pass over his road, engraved on a plate of solid silver. This year he has concluded to change the style, and being an old Santa Fe resident, and a friend of Mr. Spitz, he thought of a design in filigree. While here recently President Mears conferred with Mr. Spitz on the subject and a sample pass was turned out. Mr. Mears writes that the sample meets his views in all respects and the jeweler is instructed to fill the order at once. The sample after which they are to be made is a card three inches in length by one and a half inches in width. The outer edge is a rim of sterling silver highly polished, and the inside is of frosted filigree work. In the center is a tiny solid silver plate bearing the autograph of Mr. Mears, and resting on the filigree surface, in raised letters of burnished silver, are the words "Rio Grande Southern railroad, pass ———, 1892. Otto Mears, president Silverton route." It would surprise the average reader if the actual cost of filling this order

was here named. It is safe to say that the receipt of these magnificent tokens of regard will create a sensation among the Hon. Otto Mears' multitude of railroad friends throughout the nation.

It will be noted that while the passes were issued for the Southern, Mears still signed himself as president of the Silverton. It was about this time, too, that he began in the public prints to assume certain of the inevitable attributes of an American dignitary and we find him respectfully spoken of as "The Honorable Otto Mears."

Today the Mears passes are very much in requisition among antiquarians and collectors, and A. M. Camp, son of Banker A. P. Camp of First National Bank and Hanging Tree fame, showed us two that had belonged to his father, one a conventional silver pass over the Southern and the other a white buckskin pass dated 1888 and good over the Silverton Railroad.

"I rather guess that Mears tried out the idea of spectacular passes in buckskin and other non-precious materials before he undertook the silver one," Mr. Camp told us. "There are a dozen or fifteen of the original silver passes now known to collectors and I suppose there must be others somewheres around. Mears was pretty liberal with them, but I once saw a gold pass, similar in design but heavier and obviously quite an expensive souvenir, which I think he had made for very close friends or big shippers over the Southern. I believe there were only three or four of these ever made and my mother remembers seeing one belonging to Arthur Clarke, a mining man at Silverton, years and years ago."

The opening years of the Southern were awash with the romantic atmosphere of railroading. The silver mines at Telluride, Ophir, Rico and the La Platas were booming and the coal mines at Porter and Hesperus were being operated for their comparatively low grade fuel. The road's thirty-five locomotives snorted and rolled over Dallas Divide and Lizard Head with as many as twenty freights a day and passenger trains over its three divisions covered the entire length of the road twice a day in each direction. In the nineties, too, for several years there were through narrow gage sleepers with elaborately paneled interiors and silver finished Pirsch lamps and there were the private palace cars of the Telluride millionaires and the elaborate business cars of Mears himself and other road officials. One of these is preserved to this day, along with the rotary plow and an emergency helper engine, in the round house at Rico. Tourists from the east in plug hats and visiting Englishmen in Dundrearies and deerstalkers crowded their brass railed observation platforms and William H. Jackson immortalized the little trains posed, as was made necessary by the photographic resources of the time, against the background of Lizard Head.

The financial difficulties of the Southern set in soon after its first flush of prosperity and by 1895 it had passed under the control of the Denver and Rio Grande Western whose subsidiary it has been ever since. For almost forty years the tonnage from the mines declined, although other unforeseen commodities have recently partly taken the place of ores, and in 1930, after deficits had achieved a grand total of \$2,841,000 and the road was losing \$56,000 a year on operating expenses over and above its income from freight and passengers alone, it passed into receiver-

ship. The receiver, Victor A. Miller, first set about the reduction of operating costs and to this end he abandoned steam passenger service, and Jack Odenbaugh, the chief mechanic, fashioned the seven railbuses which subsequently became known as "Galloping Geese." These huge, silver painted rail vans had for their power Winton and Pierce Arrow motors, a large l.c.l. compartment in the rear and seats for approximately seven passengers in the tonneau with the driver. A legend of the line has it that on occasion fifteen passengers have been accommodated, several of them Indians at that, and that the result was not all that could be desired by an exacting traveller.

As of 1946 the Southern has six steam freight locomotives on its roster and six of the original Geese, one having come to an untimely end near Hesperus and been rendered, like Humpty-Dumpty, irreparable. There are also half a dozen Mikados and Consolidations leased from the Rio Grande Western, and together they manage to horse one freight a day each way over each of the road's three divisions, making a total of six separate freight movements. Mostly these are double headed, the helper engine sometimes being cut into the middle of the consist and sometimes coupled on ahead of the road engine. About three quarters of all the freight carried east to Chama and Alamosa by the Rio Grande Western derives from the Southern, against, it may be said, every inclination of the parent company which has repeatedly made efforts to abandon all service west of Durango. The ever-growing importance of the crops in this region, however, combined with the circumstance that lack of roads makes their removal by highway entirely out of the question, has effectively blocked this aim.

Despite its antiquity — two of the Southern's engines date from 1881 and the rest are of only slightly less venerable vintage — breakdowns in motive power are infrequent, but roadbeds and rolling stock are in lamentable shape and during the week we were inspecting its resources the Southern had three serious derailments, one in each of its three divisions although, fortunately, the one in the Middle Division was on the Telluride branch and not the main line.

"There's no trip like it anywhere in the world and you had better take it if you can," we had been told by E. A. West, general manager of the Rio Grande back in Denver, and so, indeed, we did.

A trip over the passenger divisions of the Southern covered by the Galloping Goose service is not too easy of arrangement and it was at length decided that our best bet was to take the morning Goose out of Dolores, disembark at Lime Spur below Vance Junction, take the mail truck up to Telluride for luncheon and return to Dolores over the same route that afternoon. We had already driven along and photographed the northern division and knew the countryside between Placerville and Ridgeway over Dallas Divide.

To this end we left Durango late one November afternoon and put up at Denny's Hogan at Dolores for the night. Denny's Hogan is a small but scrupulously clean hunter's shebang and the night, from three in the morning until daylight, was tumultuous with gunners who thumped on the stairs, admonished dogs and unsobber companions and crashed off into the darkness with meshing gears and roaring motors. There is also at



Dolores a Green Frog Saloon and the private narrow gage of the Montezuma Lumber Company, the latter of which we explored while it was still daylight. For no apparent reason the Montezuma had purchased from the Rio Grande a coach, No. 311, which reposed on a house track in its yards in an excellent state of preservation and an entirely serviceable monument to the coach builder's art in the early seventies. Its upholstery was intact, its ornate silver lighting fixture complete, there was fresh coal in its stove bin and it had perhaps once been in the mind of the company to ferry the lumberjacks into town on Saturday night, a project they had evidently abandoned as was attested by the inviolate condition of the car's inner economy.

Our Goose started with split second promptness with two other passengers, a good natured farm woman bound for Rico with an armload of purchases made at the County Fair at Cortez the night before, and a bridge worker for the railroad going out as a replacement to Vance Junction. The driver kept a Winchester Express Rifle beside him on the seat and the other two passengers immediately dozed off into a sort of jerky trance. A Goose progresses on the level at about twenty-five miles an hour and with a fearful mechanical whirring and clatter unassociated with any other known form of automotive travel.

From Dolores to Stoner the tracks lie through pleasant meadows and to Rico along the shallow but rugged course of the Dolores River. Cows and free horses abounded on the track but there were hardly any other signs at all of domestic life or human habitation. From Rico to Vance Junction lay the really dramatic terrain of the journey.

It was at Rico, too, that we picked up four additional passengers, two Indian squaws, a papoose in the arms of one of them, and a brave of extreme height, surly mein and powerful odor. The women were in holiday finery of startling color and careful arrangement. All the way to Vance Junction and throughout the return trip in the afternoon the three adult Indians consumed popcorn, and sucked lollipops, commodities which they obviously favored and of which they carried with them an immoderate supply.

In point of actual fact no piece of rolling stock, not even a business car, with special arrangements of visibility, could offer more advantages than a Goose for viewing what is beyond compare the most dramatic stretch of railroad construction in the United States. North of Rico the grade begins a sharp ascent and the terrain becomes increasingly wild. The Southern crosses the shaft of the St. Louis Mine and a few helmeted miners waved in passing. The driver allowed that the Johnny Bull Mine had, in its time, given up a solid million in gold alone.

A few miles beyond the Rico coke ovens is a timber spur of the Montezuma Lumber Company where a quantity of *blanchisage* strung on the clothesline of a bunk car stood out stiff and frozen in the wind, and, in sight of Lizard Head, we wound over the high, curving trestles into the deep cut in the hillside where, only a few years before, a train had been buried in the snowdrifts for nine whole days and nights and food had been dropped to the marooned passengers and train crew from airplanes.

"They came out as fat and happy as you could ask," the Goose's pilot told us. "A little dirty perhaps on account of not washing much



all that time, but all the narrow gage passenger cars hereabout carry stoves so as to keep warm in case the engine gets disconnected and, hell, these folk were as snug as so many bugs in a rug. Loved it they did when the newspaper interviewed them. You'd have thought they's been to the pole."

At Lizard Head the Goose hauled up to the deserted depot where three feet of snow had drifted on the porch and the driver reported himself to the dispatcher in Durango by telephone. The long snowsheds over the Divide were uncommonly gloomy, even at noon, and it was easy to imagine what carnival might be held by the elements once winter had really set in amongst these lonely peaks and windswept uplands.

Below Lizard Head the line of the Southern descends through a series of amazing swoops and spirals around Trout Lake and into a canyon where the great flumes leading from the lake itself down into the scattered townships of the valley of the San Miguel form so complex a pattern that the stretch of track is known as "Mears Puzzle." At Trout Lake the passenger list of the Goose was augmented by a venerable codger with one leg who was so much of an antiquity as to be seemingly incapable of either speech or motion. From far up the rails we were able to see him standing beside the dam, and when the Goose paused to pick him up it required the combined offices of ourselves and the driver (the Indians would have none of the project) to hoist the ancient party into a seat. At no time between there and Vance Junction did he offer conversation, but contemplated the snowbanks outside the window with the disinterested acceptance of the very old. Later at Telluride we were to see him again amidst the mineral specimens and stuffed mountain lions of the Sheridan Hotel bar, a bottle of indifferent whisky in front of him, absorbing it in much the same manner as he apparently viewed the entire pageant of existence, with a disdain bordering on complete obliviousness.

The trestles above Ophir are calculated to give pause to the traveller who recoils from high places nor was the conversation of the driver conducive to a feeling of complete security. At the Butterfly Mine, half a mile below Ophir, where there is a particularly not-here-to-stay looking trestle precariously spanning a deep gorge, he pointed to the tracks three or four feet from the very lip of the abyss itself.

"Used to be a stub switch there; led to a siding around that little ledge," he remarked. (If any rails had ever been laid on the ledge he indicated they had been suspended on the kind of faith that is akin to charity.) "Only a few years ago a drag was drifting down here and the front truck of the engine hit the switch point and lifted over the rails. The engine went over the edge before you could say Otto Mears and the six cars after it. No, nobody was killed, but it took three weeks to rig tackle to get the engine up and we just left the cars there. The engineer, the last I heard of, was working at a nitroglycerin factory outside Tulsa, Oklahoma. Said he wanted a job that had something safe and steady about it!"

Fatal accidents, as an incident to the terrain through which the Southern passes, have been all too frequent in the annals of the railroad. In the early days of operations an engineer named Billy Whistler was killed when his Baldwin ten wheeler overturned near Glencoe; a short

time after this the same sort of accident was fatal to Jimmy Stewart, just a few miles west of Durango. In 1906 the whole rear end of a train, five high cars and the caboose, went through a trestle a dozen miles north of Rico, killing the conductor and maiming other members of the crew. In 1909 an engine went through a bridge in a wild stretch of track south of Dolores killing the fireman, and as late as 1918 Engineer Ralph Peake was killed when his engine nosed out onto a weakened span and into flood swollen Lightner Creek just out of Durango. The most spectacular wreck the line ever knew was when, in 1910, late one January night, a light engine carried Engineer Al Bickford to his death a mile below Vance when a bridge sagged under his engine and a few minutes later a second engine and entire train following him down the three percent grade to Placerville, piled in on top of the first wreck. The mountain grades have taken their toll of the Southern.

Less gruesome but nonetheless serious mischance has been a common incident. "Right here," the driver told us between Butterfly and Ames Siding, "a slide came down one spring day along 1908 just as a freight was passing up. It cut two cars right out of the middle of the train and took them a couple of thousand feet down there. If you look carefully you can still see the wreckage down there."

You can!

Most notorious of all Colorado landslides is the perpetual mountain movement known as the Ames Slide. Here the entire façade of the mountain can be relied on to slip several times a year, usually during the spring thaw, and in 1929 such a geologic phenomenon took the entire roadbed and track several hundred feet down into the canyon creating a new hill-slope 750 feet long and fifty feet deep where the rails had been. Ore shipments from Rico to the Utah smelters stopped. Crude oil shipments from Farmington to Salt Lake were abruptly suspended. Business was at a standstill and officials claimed that it would take several months and an outlay of \$20,000 to realign the tracks. The road went into receivership and the Rio Grande, the parent company, made no effort to hide its satisfaction. Now it could close up the Southern once for all and be rid of this profitable but troublesome subsidiary! A new receiver had other ideas, however, and track gangs went to work to build a shoofly around the slide instead of attempting to tunnel through it. In less than three weeks the rails were again open for operations and at a cost of just under \$1,000!

The vitality of the Southern has always been enormous, as though something of the undefeated spirit of Otto Mears itself survived to invest its hazardous economy with an unconquerable will to live and function against all the hostile devisings of fate.

At Vance we set down the bridgebuilder and stretched our legs while the l.c.l. was being unloaded. Even in the noontime sunlight, Vance didn't look like the most cheerful of abodes for the winter months. From the depot itself the branch line to Telluride slopes down to the valley bottom and beside the station is a tool car, long since widowed of trucks and window glass, against the woodwork of the interior of which was visible the faded legend in stencil: "Rebuilt at D. & R. G. Shops, 1882."

The freight truck and passenger limousine, available when there are

more than three fares to Telluride, meet the Goose at Lime Siding a couple of miles below Vance where the highway runs to within a couple of feet of the rails. Six or eight minutes drive along the broad shoulder of the mountain bring you to the town which, for all its romantic associations and the glamorous legend of its hot youth, now partakes of a paintless and unlovely age. The hallmarks of these near ghost towns are the dusty main street, the neglected roofing, the flyblown municipal building with its public bills fluttering forlornly in the Colorado wind; all the wordless but somehow unmoving pathos of places from which the stream of life and history has passed on. There were no young men anywhere. The assay office had long since passed the last ore specimen across its counter and shut up, probably forever.

As in all but the altogether pulseless hill towns, the local newspaper and print shop, in this case the *Telluride Tribune*, still functioned amidst dusty pyramids of back numbers reaching to the ceiling and broken fonts of type which may have been new when their legends spelled "Dewey Takes Manila." There was the Opera House, the Nugget Theater showing bills for a four year old cinema quickie, the Smuggler Inn Cafe and a First National Bank Building with stained glass windows and now the abode of a lodge of Odd Fellows. Perhaps even the Odd Fellows had given up, but the I. O. O. F. of the organization still illustrated its façade in dingy letters.

Lunch in the cafe of the Sheridan Hotel was better. There was excellent steak and palatable whisky from Frankfort, Kentucky, which at once awakened memories of the brisk and businesslike little Frankfort and Cincinnati Railroad. The waitress-manager, an aging matron of cheerful disposition and chatty inclinations, saw our cameras and allowed that she had had difficulty getting films during the wars from her sister in Santa Barbara, which was a special pity this fall as the foliage had been uncommonly satisfactory and had lasted on the trees until only the week before. She specialized, it appeared, in color photography and doubtless knew a great deal more of its mysteries than either of us.

The Indians accompanied us on the trip back as far as Rico. They had invested in two pairs of rubber boots, a lunch box complete with thermos jug and a renewed and inexhaustible supply of lollypops and popcorn.

In our absence a down drag from Telluride had contrived to go on the ground and six box cars reposed at improbable angles just below Vance Station in a farrago of twisted rails and mascerated ties. The Goose ran up a crew of cheerful and, it seemed to us, unwarrantedly confident track workers who expected to get the damage repaired before dark. We set out a great store of chains, jacks and blocks and went on our way in the opinion that if they got the Telluride Branch clear in a week it would be a miracle of impressive proportions.

The Goose pilot on the down trip was somewhat less communicative than our guide on the way up and in some hurry to reach Dolores. The weather had turned threatening and heavy dark storm clouds, precursors of a blizzard, which arrived in fact in the San Juan two days later, were piling up on the horizon as we passed Lizard Head. Our Goose rocked and banged and clattered down the passes, its flanges squealing and various

unattached portions of its economy crashing and beating together in a suggestion of momentary and violent disintegration.

Only once did the demented vehicle stop between stations. The driver descended and seemed to be performing some function up forward which, in a conventional locomotive, would have concerned itself with the valve motion. Investigation disclosed that he was hiking up with a length of rusty baling wire the heavy grill cowcatcher of the Goose and securing it to the braces provided for that purpose.

"Goddam thing tore loose and been riding on the rail surface the last ten miles," he announced. "If it caught in a switch or rail joint somewhere we'd be scattered all over the landscape. Makes me nervous on those trestles!"

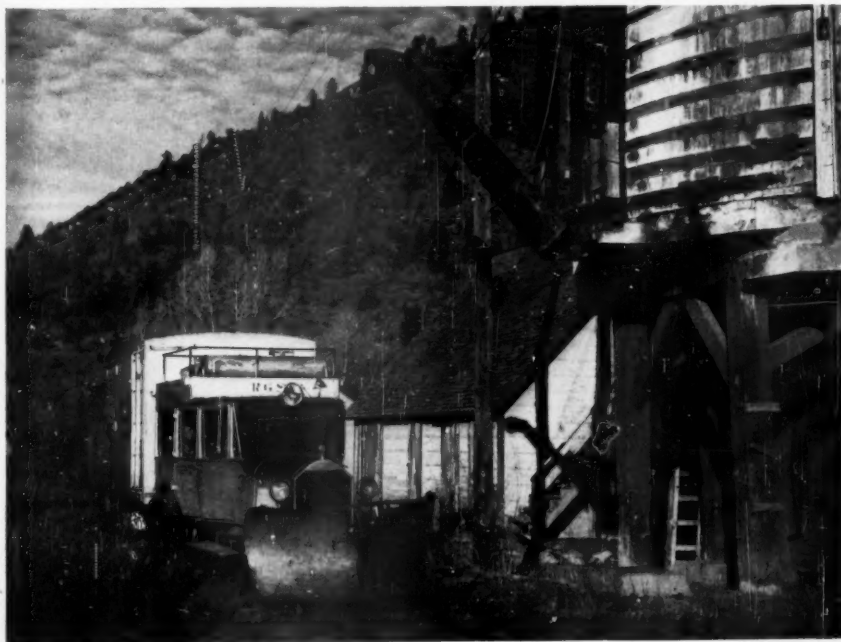
After we got home and safely in our deep beds in the Strater in Durango the incident seemed to us a complete, if microcosmic, characterization of the Rio Grande Southern Railroad. Surviving and functioning on the narrowest conceivable margin of probability, it still is a vestigial trace of all the chancey west in an age when fortune depended upon the turn of a miner's shovel, life itself on the quick alignment of a gunsight. The hands of men and the index of annual snowfall, the shifting fault lines of the mountains and risk inherent in all ancient machines were against it. But it continued to work; its wheels turned, the main rods of its locomotives flashed in their guides, obedient, more or less, to their ordained function. It was, more than anything else, it seemed to us, a monument to long odds.



#### WHERE THE RAILROAD ENDS

*C. M. Clegg photo.*

This view of the main street of Telluride, Colorado, in the Uncompahgre Mountains, shows why the spur from the main line of the Rio Grande Southern's narrow gage from Vance Junction does not continue further.



#### THE GALLOPING GOOSE

*C. M. Clegg photo.*

The six Pierce Arrow motor coach-vans on the daily passenger and mail runs between Ridgeway, Telluride, Lizard Head, Rico and Dolores are locally known as "Galloping Geese," and this one is briefly paused at Stoner, Colorado, deep in the San Miguel Mountains.





#### THE GOLD OF OPHIR

*C. M. Clegg photo.*

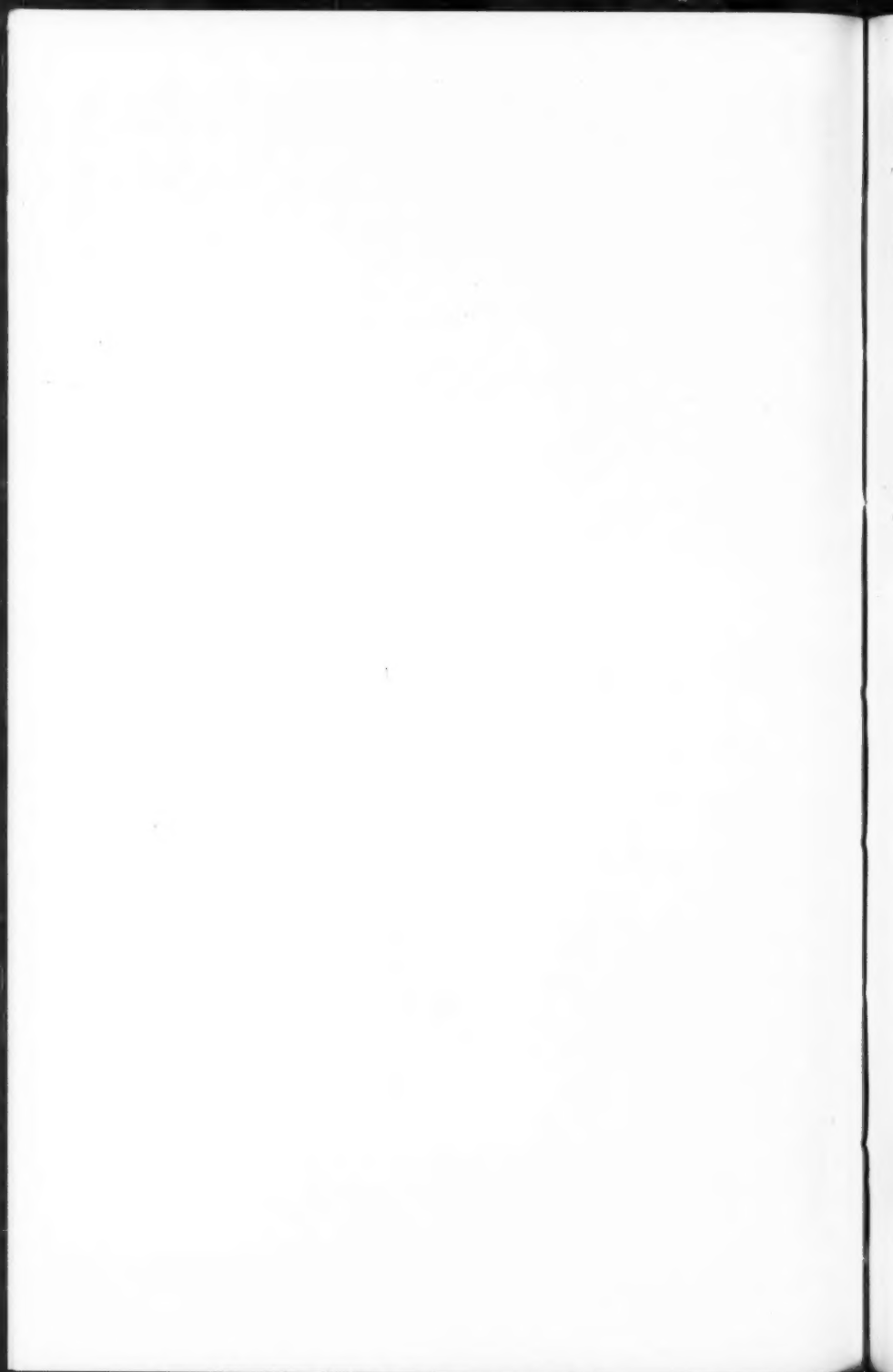
In the midst of the famous Ophir Loop is the narrow gage depot of the Rio Grande Southern's incredible line built by Otto Mears, "Pathfinder of the San Juan," in the nineties. The tiny mining town occupies a shallow niche on the face of a towering stone escarpment three thousand feet high up the facade of which the railroad finds a precarious way.



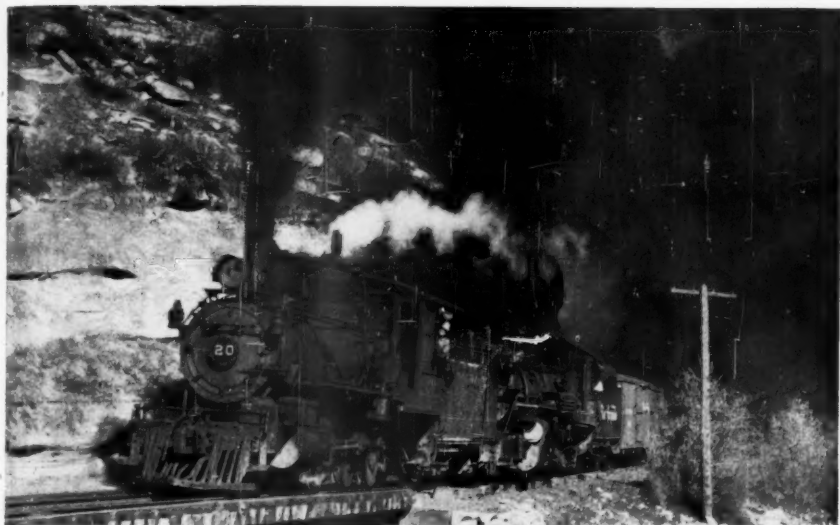
#### SNOW ABOVE TIMBERLINE

*Collection of A. M. Camp.*

On the narrow gage Rio Grande Southern near Vance, with the famous Ophir Loop and its trestles showing one above another in the distant background, a rotary is clearing the tracks in the winter of 1919.







*Lucius Beebe photo.*

#### ACTION ON THE NARROW GAGE

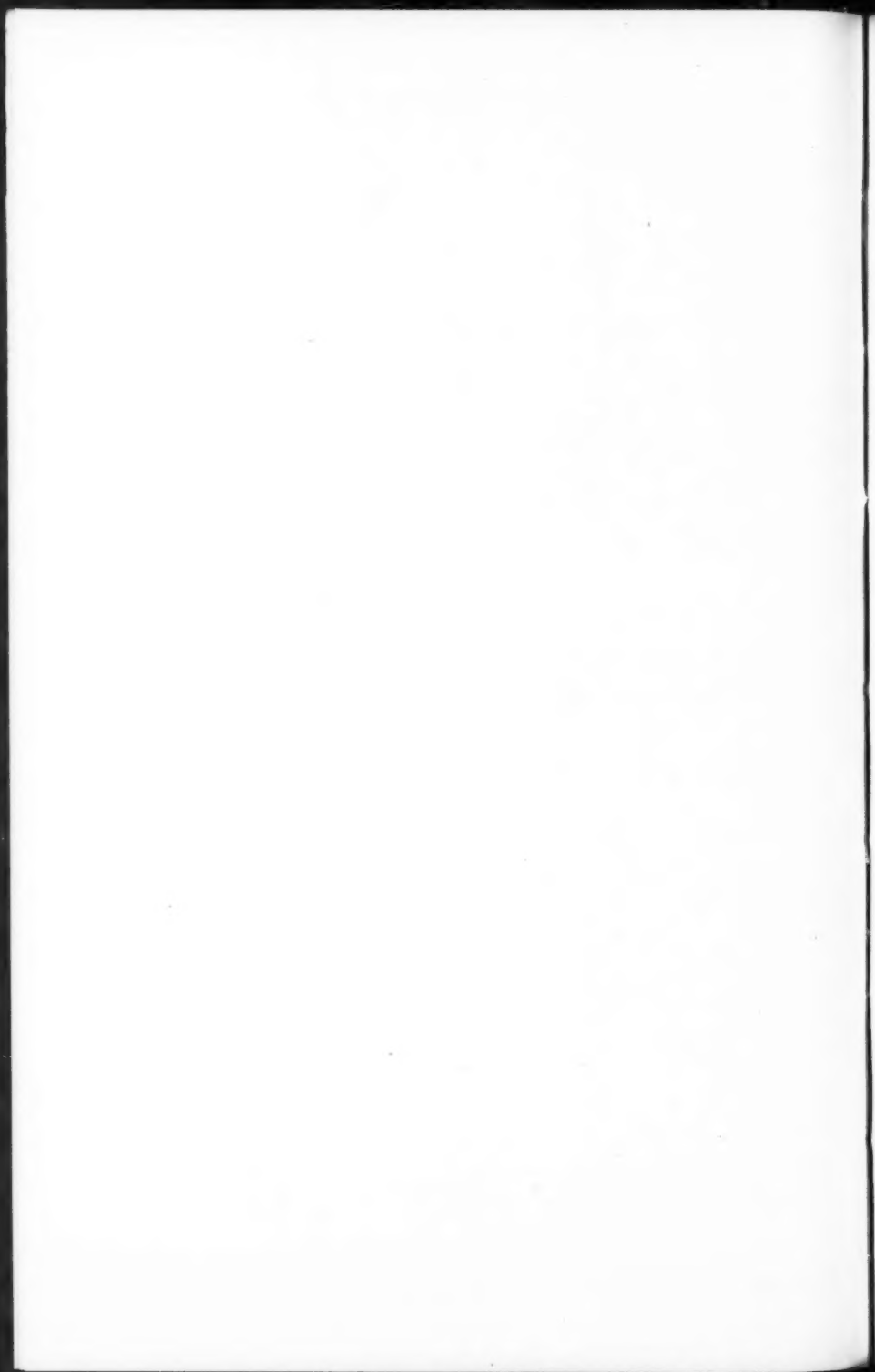
The Rio Grande Southern's No. 20 acts as a helper to road engine No. 452 leased from the D. & R. G. W. on a double shotted freight running west out of Durango near Hesperus, Colorado.



*Lucius Beebe photo.*

#### ENGINE WITH A HISTORY

The Rio Grande Southern's narrow gage engine No. 20, a highly individualistic ten wheeler, built at Schenectady in 1899, first saw service on the now legendary Florence and Cripple Creek. During its fifty-five years of existence the Southern never owned or purchased a new engine. The mesh hat on No. 20's tall stack is removed during winter months when fire is less of an operations risk than in the dry season.



## FARMINGTON

Over the Farmington Division, although we were equipped with credentials and head-end permission from the Denver offices of the Rio Grande, we preferred to follow a stock train by highway in order to secure photographs and view the countryside at more leisure than might be permitted by train orders. For a few miles south of Durango the railroad right of way runs at a water grade beside the Animas River and the highway passes along the top of a high plateau devoted to rich farms and stock ranches. Just where the highway crosses the iron at Bondad, however, our train was stalled with an enormous boulder estimated at five tons which had rolled from an overhanging cliff since the last train two days before had passed.

The rock had already been drilled and the train crew carried a supply of blasting gelatin and fuse. The charge was tamped home with a great deal of semi-professional advice from all concerned, none of it very scientific and most of it concerned with a discussion of the comparative intensity of the headache brought on by dynamite fumes and grain alcohol. There was a reverberant crack and cloud of yellow dust and, in some nanner inscrutable to the amateurs on the scene, the boulder had disintegrated without taking the rails and ties with it.

The train crew on the Farmington run was the same which had accompanied the Silverton train the day before, but the train's consist did not include the Silverton coach and the locomotive was a heavy, outside frame Mikado, No. 488, which carried, in addition to its regular tender with its head brakeman's cabin on top, an auxiliary tender which was disconnected at Aztec. There were thirty empty stock cars on the down run and half a dozen privately owned gasoline tanks.

The Farmington run, most of it along the gentle slopes of the Animas River and through riverbank clusters of willows and birches, is through a sort of golden, Indian-summer country. Although there had been snow in the northern hills and passes, here the leaves were still on the trees, withered but not fallen, and the yellow hillsides were pervaded with a warm, mellow haze which seemed to intensify as we crossed the boundary into the Aztec country of New Mexico.

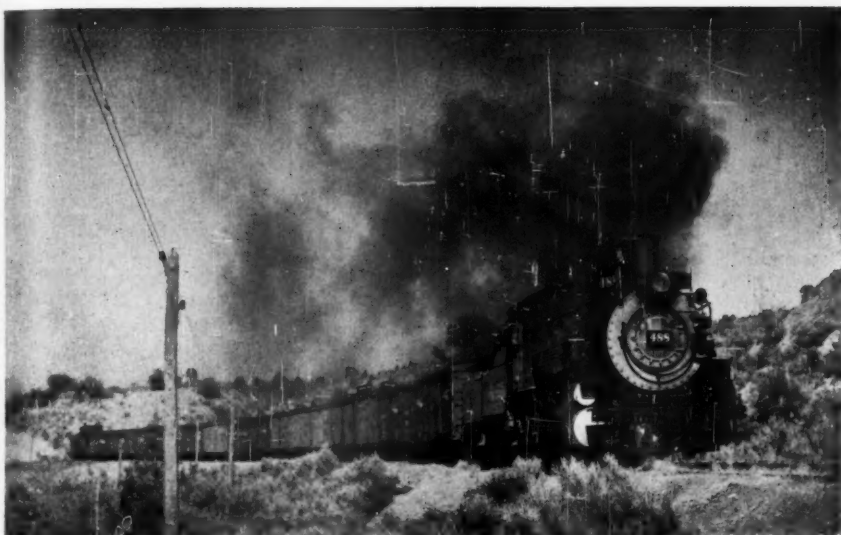
Across the line is the sleepy town of Aztec, achieved by the railroad by a long series of cuts in sandy hillsides and over a few brief wooden trestles. A drowsy four corners town with a couple of garages and groceries, Aztec is the scene of extensive Indian ruins dating from Mesa Verde times and restored by the New Mexican public works authorities. Lured by archeology, for the time being at least, we waved goodbye to Charlie Knight as he swung onto the rear platform of his caboose. The road didn't follow the high iron into Farmington and we had seen the most attractive part of its run.

The Farmington branch, running on a generally northeast-southwest

axis for forty-nine miles into New Mexico, has the distinction of being probably the only originally standard gage line in America to have its gage reduced from the conventional 4' 8½" to three feet. It was built in 1905 to forestall the determination of the Southern Pacific to build into the San Juan Basin, but the inconvenience and expense of combining standard and narrow gage operations at Durango finally occasioned its retracking in 1923 on the same width as the other railroads of the region.

Shortly after the turn of the century it was the intention of the Southern Pacific interests to run a line of their own into southwestern Colorado extending, probably, from Lordsburg, New Mexico, into Durango and bisecting the Santa Fe at Gallup, a breach of railroad manners and convention which lay lightly or not at all on the consciences of the Southern Pacific in general and E. H. Harriman in particular. The Espee had in fact a complete survey of the route prepared and was actually laying in supplies for its construction at vantage points in southern New Mexico when the Rio Grande, alarmed by the threatened invasion of Colorado and the ruthlessness of the Harriman interests, hastily laid out the Farmington standard gage branch and effectively halted the Espee, for the moment anyway. The threat lingered on for a number of years, however, and might eventually have become an actuality in spite of all the Rio Grande precautions, but in 1909 two events, the Madero revolution in Mexico and the death of Harriman, ended for all time any consideration of an Espee branch into Colorado. The design had been to remove coal from the comparatively low grade La Plata and Porter mines for Mexican export and the fueling of a projected trans-Mexican division of the Southern Pacific to some Pacific port in Mexico probably near Guaymas. The hostility of Mexico toward all American business and the death of the ambitious and hard bitten Harriman together served to discourage the plan.

Today there is an oil refinery of considerable capacity at Farmington, a smelter and a handful of other industries, but the predominant economic *raison d'être* of this remote little community is agricultural and its once or twice a week trains are mostly stock cars taking cattle and sheep off the ranges as winter approaches.



*Lucius Beebe photo.*

#### THE FARMINGTON TRAIN

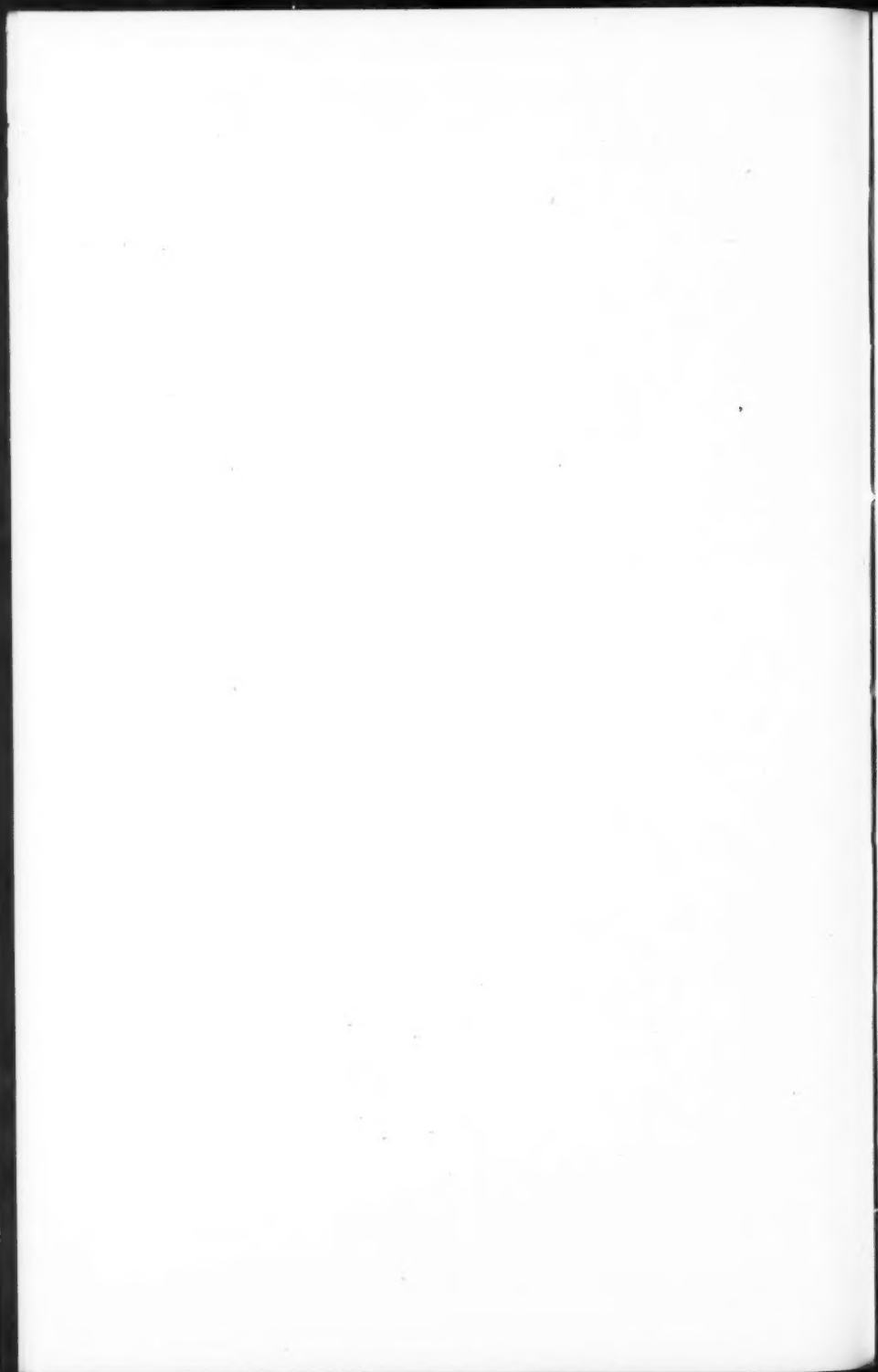
The Denver and Rio Grande Western's once a week but unscheduled freight from Durango to Farmington, New Mexico, photographed at Bondad, Colorado.



*Lucius Beebe photo.*

#### IN WINTER ATTIRE

With a steel wedge shield affixed to its pilot, the Rio Grande's narrow gauge No. 476 takes the "San Juan" across the winter mountains of southwestern Colorado. Note where a rock slide has been encountered on the right flange of the shield.



## SILVERTON

The twice a week Durango-Silverton run over the iron of the Denver and Rio Grande Western through the canyon of the Rio de las Animas Perdidas is one of the last two scheduled narrow gage passenger runs west of the Ohio River, the other being the Rio Grande's daily luxury passenger haul, the San Juan, each way between Durango and Alamosa.

The Silverton train does not compare, when it is made up on Tuesday and Saturday mornings in the Durango yards, with the sleek green mail and baggage cars, coaches and parlor-restaurant-observation car of the glittering little San Juan, but for those on whose imaginations the romantic past of western railroads has a wistful hold, it is no less of a page out of the chronicle of the silver legend of the Colorado pioneers. Usually Charlie Knight, senior conductor on the Silverton run, checks up on from a dozen to twenty freight cars, and the end of the little train is possessed of a sort of panache furnished by the Silverton coach and the crew's little red crummy.

The Silverton coach itself is a museum piece dating as it does from 1882 with its ornate brass coal oil lamp fixtures, cannonball stove in the corner, comfortable leather seats and railed-in rear platform. It has travelled an unrecorded number of thousands of miles through hot summer noontides and in the deadly blizzards of the Colorado winters and always it has come back to the yards at Durango a little richer for one more footnote to the chapter of the narrow gage.

The bright November morning we started, the Silverton coach had almost a dozen passengers: a number of hunters armed with a variety of weapons of approximate precision which would have interested Francis Bannerman; two moppets on their way, with lunches neatly wrapped in shoe boxes, to visit an aunt at Elk Park, some unidentified Utes and two young ladies just out from the east, one of whom had never before in her life made a trip by railroad until this eventful morning! One of the Utes, an ageless crone who offhand estimated her own years at 110, had spent the night on the depot platform, alternately smoking Chesterfields and asking night crews how soon the Silverton train departed. She had missed a train out of Denver back in 1874 and was taking no chances now.

At the last moment three additional moppets, bound evidently for a weekend in the mountains, were kissed aboard by solicitous parents and the train highballed slowly out of the depot, under the rear windows of the Strater Hotel, across the Animas City highway, across the high girdered iron bridge and into the open meadows of Animas Valley. Its progress was accomplished with unaccelerated dignity and a good deal of lurching in the clerestory of the caboose. Two juveniles armed with shotguns of a period design to coincide with the age of the coach sat on the roof of the first high car and gave the entire train a frontier atmosphere. A youthful geologist returning from the wars and viewing for the first time in five

years the beloved mountains of his homeland made a brave show of unsentimentality and remarked in some detail on the rock formations which made Animas Canyon one of the prospector's paradises of the world.

The first stop is a dozen miles out at Hermosa and here the grade began to make itself felt. Up ahead No. 375 shot a plume of angry soot a hundred feet into the sky and now and then the toot of its whistle was faintly discernible above the crashing of drawbars and clatter of the caboose trucks themselves. The Permian rock formations form a cliff to one side of the train while on the other the treetops slope off into the valley. At a stop in a clearing, prearranged with the train crew, the huntsmen descended and the moppets, the Utes and the young ladies from the east alone remained in the coach. In the caboose Charlie Knight was at his desk making out a car report; in his perch in the caboose Ray Murray, the rear brakeman, surveyed the cartops of his undulant kingdom with placid but interested glance. The narrow gage freight cars of the Rio Grande are none of them new, and shopping during the war years had been infrequent, so that trains often pulled drawbars on these grades and sometimes went on the ground.

"A friend of mine, he works out on the Southern," Murray explained. "And last week his crummy goes on the ground over Hesperus way; the air line breaks and he's in the hospital now with a flat head where he hit the stove. You can't be too careful on these runs."

At the moment the Silverton train was running along a stone ledge just wide enough to accommodate its trucks, and it was possible to spit an easy 900 feet down into the Animas River, and the authors both reflected on the wisdom of Mr. Murray's attitude. The engine, not more than a hundred feet away, was running in exactly the opposite direction from the coach and caboose, and at the bottom of the gorge the foam of the river was barely visible between them. Such U-turns are frequent on the Silverton run and it is proverbial that there are places where the rear brakeman can lean across and get a light from the fireman's cigar. Timid passengers can be observed leaning anxiously back from the rim of the ledge and inclining the weight of their persons toward safety and the inside of the track.

Here the breathless abyss begins gradually to abate and the track comes nearer to the level of the river itself. Actually the grade is still steep, sometimes four percent, but the pitch of the river bottom is even steeper and at Western the rails are almost water level. At Western, too, the Colorado Power Company's hydro-electric plant is activated by water from Electra Lake thousands of feet above and distributes electricity for miles around, even as far as Red Mountain and Ouray, the other side of Silverton.

"Right along here was where the original Spaniards found gold," Murray tells us. "Their milling plants and stone breakers are lost up in those canyons. I've never seen them, but I've heard they had great granite millstones that weigh tons. There's millions in there today if you know where to look for it and geologists and prospectors are through these mountains as thick as flies. Now and then somebody even does a little digging, starts what he calls a mine and sells some stock, usually outside of Colorado. Right up here a mile or so somebody started a promotion



and sold a big hunk of it to Bing Crosby. Right along in here, too, the river got its name. A whole party of Spanish miners, this was back before 1800, tried to make a ford and never were seen again. The Spaniards called it after them: the River of Lost Souls. It's wicked water when it comes fresh in spring and anybody that gets into it he never gets out."

Just beyond Western the hogger whistled for a stop and half a carload of builders' materials were unloaded for a venturesome home builder who was starting a hunter's lodge in what seemed to be the loneliest clearing known to mortal man. Since it was wholly inaccessible from the highway and had no other communication with the outside world than that furnished twice a week by the Silverton train, it was apparent that he figured the railroad was here to stay.

At Hunt train crews on the Silverton run like to point out the only place in the forty-five miles of the haul where the right of way is double tracked. The last week in August 1941 the line was blocked, paradoxically enough, by a tremendous snowslide and it was found cheaper to build a shoofly about a thousand yards long around it rather than dig it out at the time. Later the snow melted and now the Rio Grande has a passing and storage track at this point. Snow in the San Juan country isn't entirely a seasonal manifestation and there are deep canyons and shady crevasses where it remains from one year to the next. Old timers are fond of recalling the famous Fourth of July Blizzard of 1907. Snow started falling during the first inning of a hotly contested baseball game between the Silverton team and the chivalry of Ouray. By the third inning a bonfire had been built at second base to show where it was and the game was called in the sixth when four inches of snow underfoot made it advisable to continue the festivities in the bar of the Silverton Palace Hotel.

The Silverton run is scheduled in the time card of the Rio Grande to consume from 9:15 in the morning to 12:15, but the depot operator at Silverton is not too often able to give Durango an O.S. on its arrival and it was quarter of two before we arrived amidst the tailings and abandoned shafts which look down upon the township from canyon walls towering incredibly into the Colorado sky. Lunch had been served in the caboose: sandwiches from the Chinaman's in Durango, coffee hospitably confectioned by the train crew, cigars and Fitzgerald whisky provided by the authors who, while refraining from dressing for dinner in the wilderness, saw no good reason for depending upon local resources in the matter of refreshment and have frequently found themselves justified.

The Silverton Palace is gone today but gaffers in the bar of the Imperial Hotel will still tell strangers about the ball game between attempts to sell them genuine nuggets filled with sure enough gold from the Bitter Root Mine. Silverton isn't quite a ghost town, but it approximates it and is surely haunted by a vast and energetic prosperity that toppled in the Silver Panic of 1893. In those days, Charlie Knight recalls, when the Shendoah No. 3, the Brooklyn Mine and the Golconda were producing millions every year, the narrow gage schedule into Silverton read like a main line time card. There were two full passenger trains a day each way and a night train with through sleepers for Denver by way of Alamosa and Walsenburg. There were luxury parlor cars on the day runs and diner, too, and the silver kings came down on their narrow gage private

cars so that champagne and vintage Cognac bottles littered the Animas Canyon from the Needles to Taft Siding. Pheasant and Scotch grouse were a commonplace on the cafe menus and the *Silverton Standard* published a society item about it when E. W. Walker, manager of the Green Mountain Mine, came back from a weekend in Durango in a new silk hat and wearing a carnation in the buttonhole of his Prince Albert. Silverton was that stylish.

Today the *Silverton Standard* is still published, but on a weekly basis, by Lloyd S. Jones, a former New York newspaperman, on the press which once in the eighties printed *The Solid Muldoon*. The mines, some of them, are working, but the ore that is shipped out is lead and zinc concentrates in box cars which go to refineries at Leadville and Farmington and cruder ores which go all the way to another smelter at Amarillo, Texas. Lloyd Jones also sells ore, small specimens of semi-precious quartzes and such, which his wife sets into little bases of printer's metal and prices at two bits for pin money.

Silverton is old, old hat to Charlie Knight, who has worked for the railroad for every adult day of sixty-one years except ten days when he hired out to the Golconda Mines but didn't like it. "Damned if those dynamite fumes didn't drive me about crazy underground and all cooped up. I told the foreman I guessed I'd go back to the quiet life on the railroad. That was in 1905 and I haven't been off the payroll since!"

"There was lots of railroading out of Silverton when I was a young fellow," he said. "The Silverton Northern ran up to Eureka and Forks of Animas, but old man Mears couldn't put it through Red Mountain to Ouray. It was no go. The mountain had him licked. Then there were the Silverton, Gladstone and Northern and the Silverton Railroad, all of them trying to get through to Ouray and the north. None of them did but they did a lot of local business and the Silverton Northern had a regular passenger schedule and big time operations even though it went only fourteen miles altogether.

"Did I know Mears? By G — and by Otto I did! Right over there, that longish low building! That was his machine shop. All the engines around here were sort of interchangeable on the Mears railroads and he shopped them there. The old man could build everything from a locomotive to a turnbuckle right under that roof and could do anything himself that his best forge man could! A fine, wonderful old man, by G — and many's the day I've seen him, morning coat, whiskers and all, at the driver's side of some old teakettle with a wedge plow on the pilot beam and two engines running behind him stick his train into a drift that today no snotnosed hogger with dynamite and rotary would walk into at more than a mile an hour. He was a hard old man. I think running into the mountains all his life made him that way. But fair and a right man to work for. Wherever he is now he's driving engines and giving them hell in heaven! A great, strong man!"

Charlie Knight came by railroading naturally. His father had been a section foreman on the Silverton a few miles down the canyon in 1888 when the railroad was new. Charlie started out as engine watchman in the roundhouse at Durango, working the injectors on long Arctic nights and keeping the fires just so against the morning runs. He hired out as wiper

at one time to the Silverton Northern but that was long ago when he was very young and since then he has lived on the Rio Grande iron like his father before him.

Charlie Knight seemed to us very much a part of the railroad, the archetypal conductor who remembered Mears, itself a hallmark of authenticity in the San Juan, a grizzled, blasphemous old timer who had been on the scene that dark night when two trains, one right after the other, had plunged from the washed out trestle near Elk Park and who had weathered a thousand blizzards when the long nights and deep snows above timberline made men think of the lost Spaniards in the Rio de las Animas Perdidas.

The Silverton Railroad Company of which Knight spoke was organized by Otto Mears in 1887 and had for its bed the grade of Mears' own and famous Rainbow Route Toll Road. Construction was started in 1888, but the last and most difficult stretch to Red Mountain and the Joker Tunnel near Ironton was not completed until November 1889 when the line totaled seventeen miles. For a number of years an enormous quantity of ores and concentrates was hauled down this iron and the passenger fare was twenty cents a mile. The Silverton was reorganized as the Silverton Railway in 1904, still under Mears' operation. The section between Red Mountain and Ironton was shortly after this abandoned because the switchbacks were almost impossible of negotiation with any number of cars and in 1926 the track was torn up. A car from the Silverton may be seen today in Animas City where it stands beside the highway, a lunch wagon.

The Silverton, Gladstone and Northern Railroad to Gladstone, 7.5 miles, was built in 1896 by the Gold King Mining Company to haul out concentrates from the mines along Cement Creek. The Gold King closed down in 1910 but occasional freights moved over the road until 1915 when the track was torn up and sold for scrap.

The schedule for the run calls for a return trip out of Silverton at 1:15 arriving at Durango at 4:35, but the day we were aboard there was more switching at the north end than usual and Charlie gave the highball to roll ten cars of concentrate and four of crude ore at about three o'clock. For the return trip the coach was coupled on behind the caboose. No particular reason for it; simply it saves one switching operation.

With Murray on watch in the cupola of the crummy, Charlie Knight settled down in the comfort of the coach whose hot stove was welcome and whose woodworks creaked and protested after the manner of all ancient things as the mountainsides slipped slowly past the narrow windows. Although a tall man could have reached the fixture unassisted Charlie went through the ritual of unhooking a brass fitted lamplighter and turned up the wick of the coal oil light.

"No damn electric light is half so good," he said around the edge of a cigar. "I tried to get my wife to throw the electricity out of the house a while back, but she's got modern notions. Now this old coal oil, it's different; it's kind on the eyes I say."

The trip down is made in somewhat less time than the up haul both because of the favoring grade and probably because the engine crew is anxious to get home for dinner.

"We never had much trouble on this run except the two engines in the river back there by Western," said Charlie, "but there have been lots of times when there was no service for months when the river went on a rampage. Some of these rails we're riding over now were the first steel rails made by the Colorado Coal and Iron Company — that's the Colorado Fuel and Iron now — back in 1882, and some of them were new last year. You wouldn't believe it, but I've seen a length of sixty-five pound rail lifted off its ties and driven clean through the trunk of a three foot tree. That was back after the flood of 1909. The roadbed was out for two miles that year along by milepost 476 and we had to put in the new rails on timber cribs.

"And the snow! By G— I've seen slides along by Needleton twenty feet deep right on the rails themselves. In the winter of 1932 we got a ditcher and twenty-five men to work at noon on April 4th and it was the night of the 7th before they were through one drift alone. They used 250 cans of black powder, too. Black powder's a lot cheaper than dynamite and works better in snow anyway. Besides it don't freeze up and then blow everything to hell and gone when you're thawing it out in a cook stove!"

Charlie was humorously reminded of one time back in the nineties when a miner of his acquaintance prospecting down by Golconda No. 2 was unfreezing a couple of dozen sticks of 80 percent gelatin in the oven alongside a pan of hard biscuits for breakfast. A call of nature required him in a chalet slightly removed from his cabin when there was a shocking explosion. "It blew the privy to flinders, by G—, right around his ears and left him sitting there. Not a scratch on him but mighty embarrassed he was when everybody came up running!"

Up ahead a crossing whistle sounded and Charlie took the precaution of exchanging his official conductor's hat for a fur lined bonnet with flaps that came down over his ears as protection against the night air. "We're in the yards," he remarked as he lighted the way to the platform with an incongruously modern electric lamp. And so we were, right at the back door of the Strater Hotel its lights warm and welcoming in the winter night.



SILVERTON YARDS

*C. M. Clegg photo.*

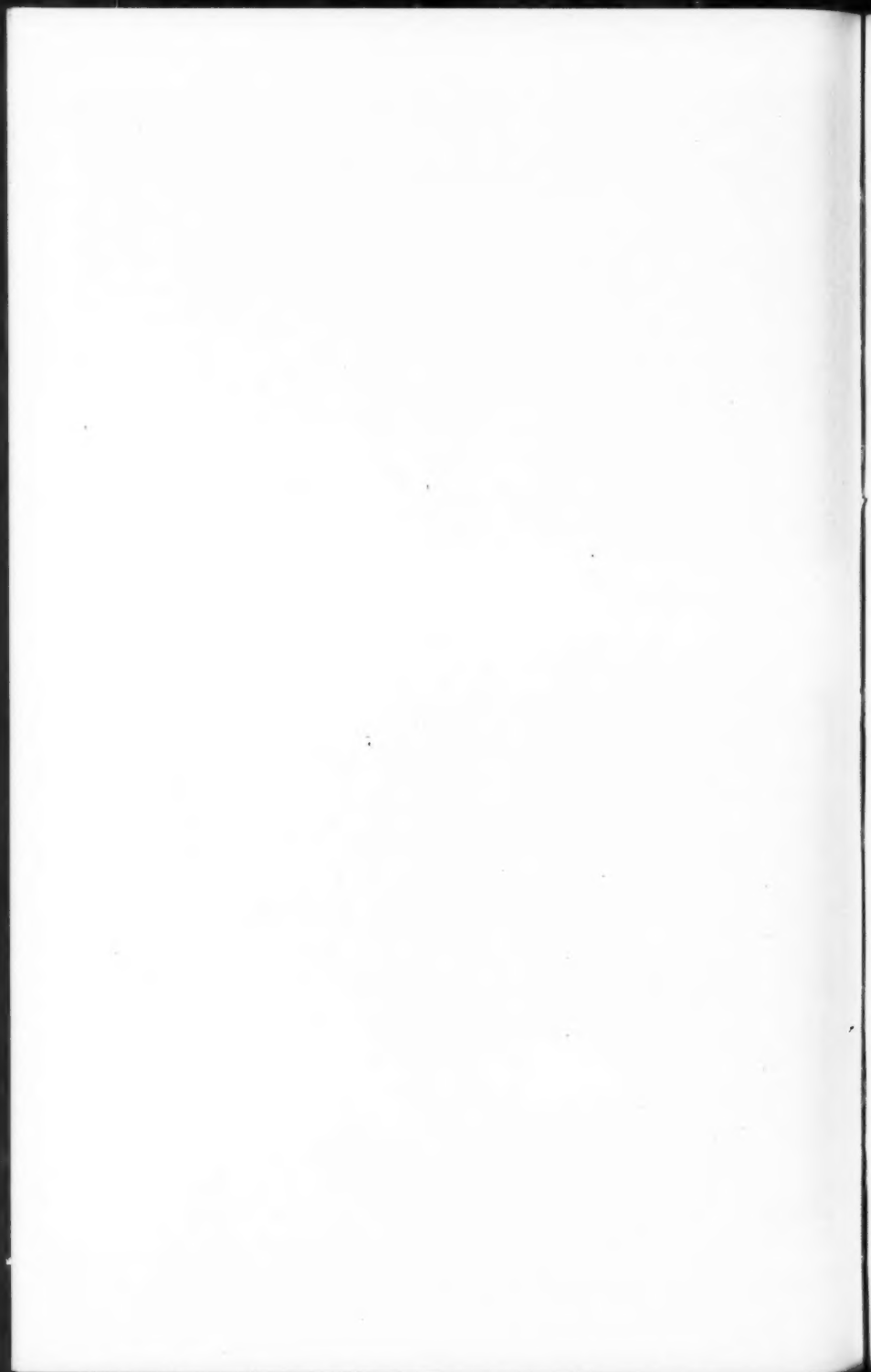
The D. & R. G. W. narrow gage yards at Silverton, Colorado, showing in the background the shops where, at the turn of the century, Otto Mears maintained the motive power of his Silverton Northern and Silverton, Gladstone and Northern Railroads, long since abandoned.

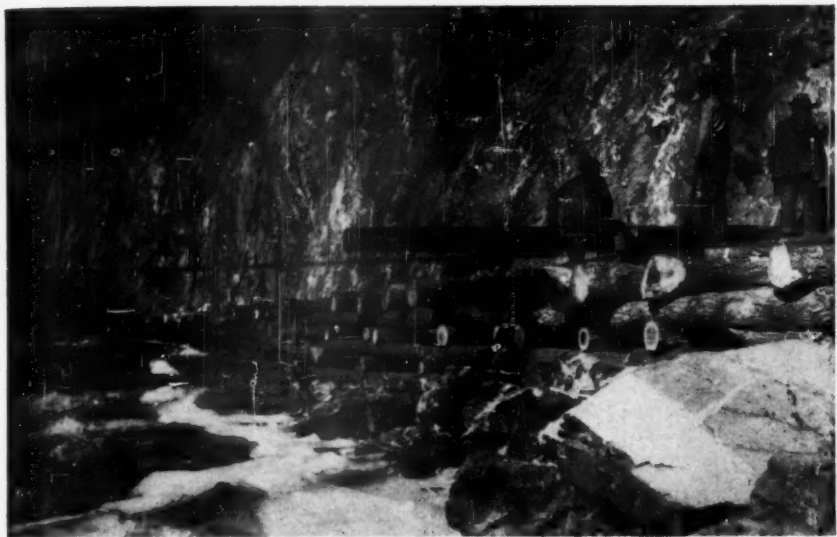


LIGHT FOR THE SILVERTON COACH

*C. M. Clegg photo.*

This coal oil lighting fixture on the Rio Grande's narrow gage coach on the Silverton-Durango run is heavily plated in silver mined long ago in the Uncompahgre Mountains.

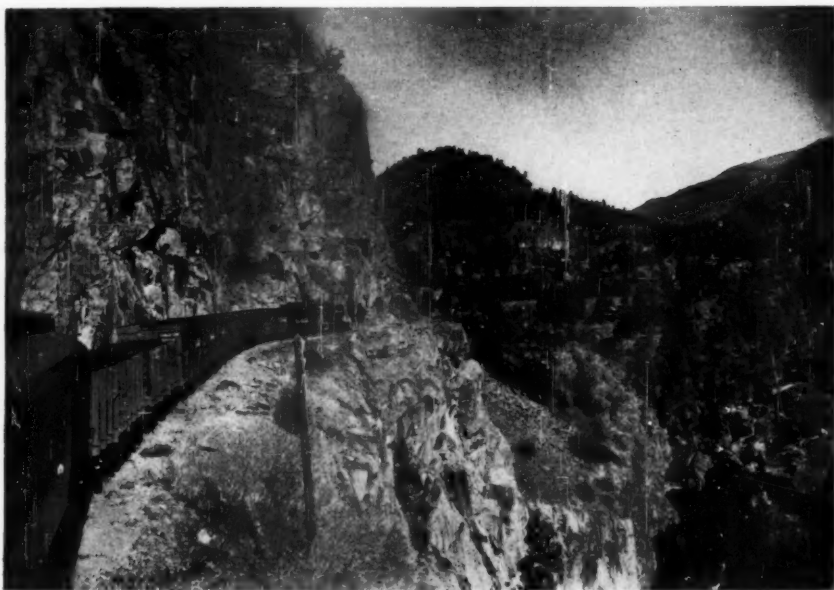




*Collection of Doris Wilson.*

#### AFTER THE WATERS FELL

This elaborate crib was built for several miles above the water mark in the Canyon of Animas after the spring floods had taken out the tracks of the Silverton branch of the Rio Grande narrow gage in the spring of 1915.

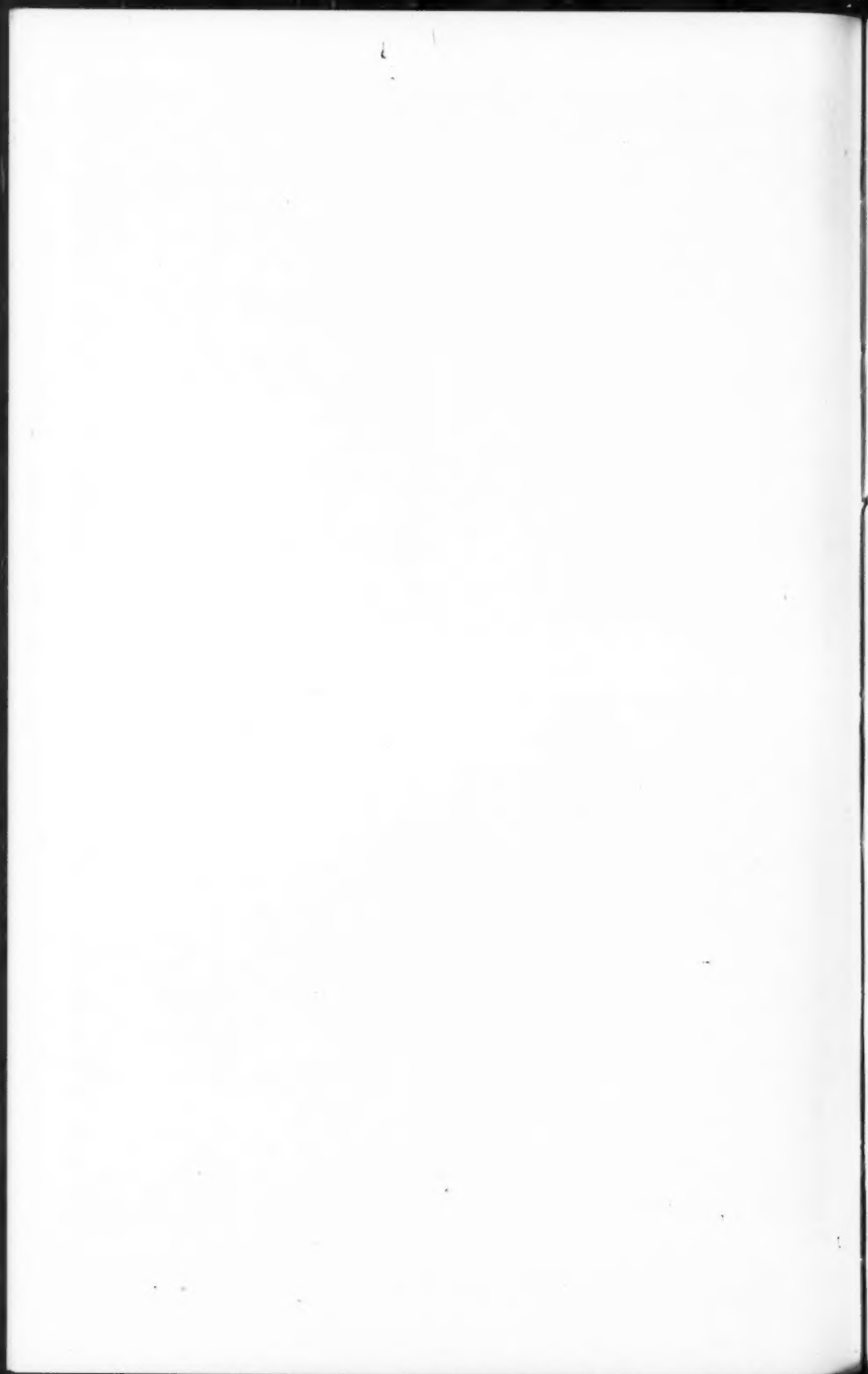


*C. M. Clegg photo.*

#### ABOVE ANIMAS CANYON

A thousand feet above the rushing waters of the Rio de las Animas Perdidas the D. & R. G. W.'s narrow gage Silverton train clings to a six foot ledge blasted in the face of the sheer rock of the mountain. Although derailments are not infrequent, here no train has ever gone over the edge of the canyon since the day the line was opened. The picture was taken from the caboose.









*C. M. Clegg photo.*

#### TWICE WEEKLY TO SILVERTON

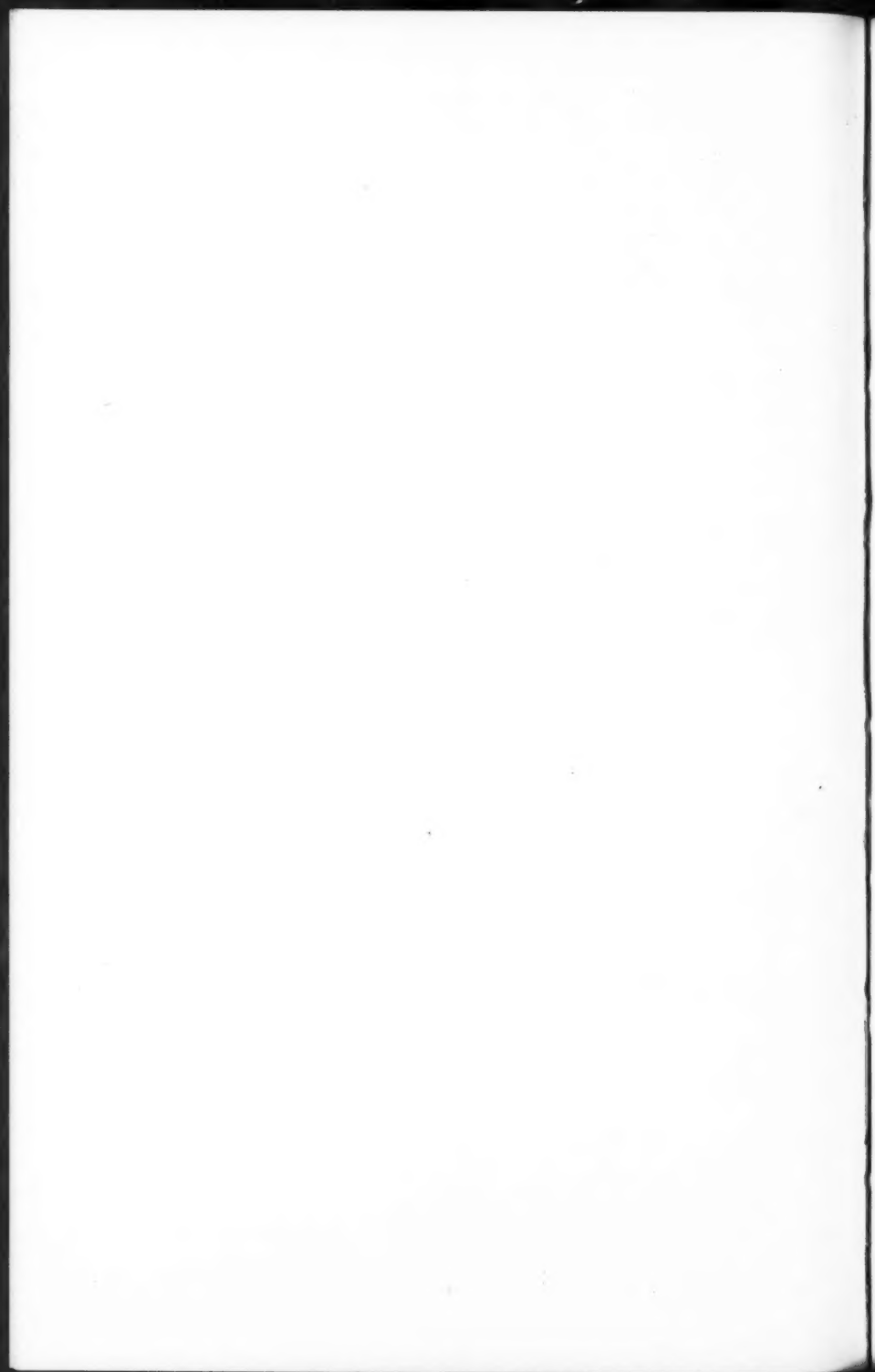
The Tuesday and Saturday narrow gage mixed train from Durango sets down its passengers at Silverton in the midst of the legendary San Juan Mountains of Colorado.



*Collection of Doris Wilson.*

#### WHEN THE RAILS GO OUT

On the Silverton branch of the Rio Grande narrow gage the spring flood of the Animas River in 1915 took this length of seventy pound rail and drove it right through the fir tree stump in which it is here shown embedded.



## ALAMOSA

The morning departure and afternoon arrival of the San Juan have been for many years and still are the major events in the Durango day. It is a warming circumstance that the going and coming of the little train which is the town's most tangible and important contact with the world across the mountains, despite the bus and freight service maintained by the trucks of the Rio Grande, should continue its hold on the general imagining. Its afternoon whistle, just at four o'clock as it passes through Carbon Junction, is as much a signal for clock setting in the community as the evening whistle of the timeless George Washington is for citizens of Maysville, Kentucky. At five minutes past four when it draws into the depot there are always people down to see, functionaries to receive the mails and express and the anonymous loungers common to a thousand depot platforms.

The morning we had booked passage aboard the San Juan the yards were tied up and the railroad staff noisily demoralized until a few minutes of train time by the arrival, double headed from the east, of 105 empty stock cars. They tied up the main lines, overflowed into house tracks and storage tracks and threatened all manner of calamity until the yardmaster resourcefully rolled sixty or seventy of them down the tracks of the Southern and out onto the river bridge for temporary disposal until they could be dispatched to Farmington and Silverton. Such lengthy trains during seasonal concentration of traffic, although infrequent, were not altogether epochal and as many as 115 cars have come over the hills in a single narrow gage consist. Railroad men around the yards estimated that at some points on the division a train of this length would be making the equivalent of two complete circles at a time and the motive power units and caboose would both be headed in the same direction while at two intervening points the consist would be running in the opposite direction. They were very gratified at this complete defiance of reason and probability.

When it gets close to departure time in the morning it is the same. The day we embarked on the last narrow gage luxury train of all the many that had been scheduled in the seventy-five years since the narrow gage vogue began the coaches were, perhaps, two thirds full and the chair car, which had seats for nine, had only one vacant place. The reason was that, although the wars were over, the military draft was still in effect, and a draft of six local youths was going to Denver in first class accommodations as expressly provided by the Federal government. They were, if the record must be maintained, extremely brash, loud and ignorant young men who would have been happier and more suitably placed in an auto stage, but with time their high school obscenities and studied disinterest in the wonders of the trip became a mere leitmotif and when they went to sleep from sheer boredom with each other we missed their idiot laughter and hillbilly sophistication.

The right of way of the Rio Grande from Durango to Alamosa covers almost every variety of terrain it is possible for 200 railroad miles to en-

counter. The line is well ballasted all the way, the rail tolerably heavy and the Alamosa car, in which we occupied the two most favorable chairs by the observation window, lurched comfortably on the curves but with so little jar or vibration that it was possible without risk to poise highball glasses on the narrow window ledges, and we did.

It was a noble old thing, finished in natural oak with heavy carpets and the brass cuspidors demanded by tradition. Its rear platform accommodated two observers at a time and forward, by the immaculate metal fitted galley, a tiny cubicle seated four at table at a time. There was a wash room of more than decent state of maintenance, but one which might well give pause to a claustrophobiac and the achievement of whose most mature satisfactions was a trick that would have amused Houdini.

The first couple of hours, spent between Ignacio, Arboles and Juanita, the San Juan rolled smoothly and steadily through canyons of arching trees, beside mild water courses and through narrow cuts in stratified volcanic rock. At several stations it was apparent that the arrival of the train was very much of an event. Indian children purchased ice cream cones from the porter and adults secured the day's supply of tobacco and newspapers, waving a bit forlornly as civilization in the form of a five car, green painted narrow gage train receded down the tracks under a gentle shower of soot.

At Carracas we had a double meet: No. 115, the westbound section of the San Juan, and a long freight drag nosed in ahead of it on the passing track. In order to pass the two trains it was necessary for us to "saw by" letting the freight out into the main for part of its length so the last car of the passenger train could clear our engine. After we had run through, the westbound San Juan backed into the main, the freight backed into the passing track, and No. 115 ran around it on the last lap into Durango. The whole encounter of three trains in the autumn wilderness had about it a quality of unreality as of the rendezvous of three ships in a peculiarly lonely and uncharted ocean.

Pagosa Junction, once the scene of a lively branch line running up to the resort town of Pagosa Springs, shows today no sign of the divergent iron which until a few years ago lead into the hills and over which a considerable number of cattle and sheep were annually hauled to market in the Rio Grande's red painted stock cars. Ruben Gomez maintains a general merchandise store and warehouse; across the muddy street is his rival, W. Zabriskie, who keeps similar premises; there is a log cabin depot, a water tower, a bridge across the river and a handful of houses. Only the oldest inhabitants and professional railroad historians remember it as a busy junction. At Juanita, a few miles down the line, the only structures are a rough stock pen and a station made of an old boxcar, but at Lumberton there are extensive switching yards and storage tracks and at Monero, whose coal tipples are a clue to its excuse for existence, a few lonely graves, each white fenced and unspeakably lonely, dominate the railroad from a low hillside.

Chama is the division point on the Durango-Alamosa run and the largest town encountered. Here the fires were cleaned and water taken by the San Juan's Mikado, a westbound freight rolled into the main after we had entered the yards and half a dozen other Mikes waited in the

dusk for assignment. Between Chama and Antonito is the most spectacular portion of the Rio Grande's track and, although part of this was covered in darkness due to the advanced season of year, it was not difficult to obtain some notion of the incredibly wild magnificence of the terrain.

From Chama to the summit of the Cumbres the railroad climbs for fourteen miles at the rate of 160 feet per mile to achieve a maximum elevation at Cumbres depot of 10,000 feet. At places the track looks down a sheer abyss of several hundred feet but the voyager experiences none of the sense of breathless height of the east approach to the pass up Toltec Gorge. Here the rock masses tower in pendant immensity above the tracks on one side while on the other hand the Conejos River surges in its course 1,000 feet straight down with only the guard rail between the train's passage and the incredible drop.

Contrary to general opinion the Continental Divide on this run is not at Cumbres summit but a short distance to the west in a desolate upland plateau. Here the grade is four percent at its steepest and only a few years ago it sometimes required a fortnight and six engines behind a wedge plow or rotary, to clear the tracks after a heavy snowfall. The east approach is much less subject to obstruction from the elements and there are several tunnels at points which would otherwise be most exposed. Close to the mouth of one of these at Toltec stands the Garfield monument erected by construction crews which had reached that point in laying out the line when the martyred President was assassinated.

Luncheon had been a collation of the utmost simplicity and had consisted only of ham and eggs and highballs briefly furnished forth so as not to interfere with the view of our progress, but dinner was a more serious matter. Warned in advance of an inclination toward frugality on the part of the little train's gustatory resources, we had provided two porterhouse steaks of staggering dimensions, a firkin of Strassburg foie gras and a bottle of champagne, leaving the oddments and garnitures to the imagination of the steward.

Bill Matthews was a stately negro of great age and dignity. He had at one time, he allowed, been in service as butler in the household of a family of McKees in New York and after that served as major domo to the great Samuel Vauclain of the Baldwin Locomotive Works so that gold foil and the chilling of the produce of the Widow Clicquot were no mystery to him.

"Yes sir, many's the dinner at Mr. Vauclain's where my pantry was over my knees in empty magnums and double magnums, too, of the best wine," he remarked. "Gentlemen lived better in those days and that's a fact. Why this is the first bottle of sparkling wine I've served in this car since the Lord knows when."

There was nothing of the comedy darcy about Matthews and nothing of the minstrel show about his speech. A Godly and mindful servant of the railroad and of the Lord, when he had cleared away after dinner and there were no more requirements upon his time he occupied the remainder of the evening with his Bible and a glance over his shoulder showed him to be deep in the Book of Daniel.

Quite aside from the excellences of Strassburg and Rheims there was a flavor to our little dinner party which neither of us had ever experienced

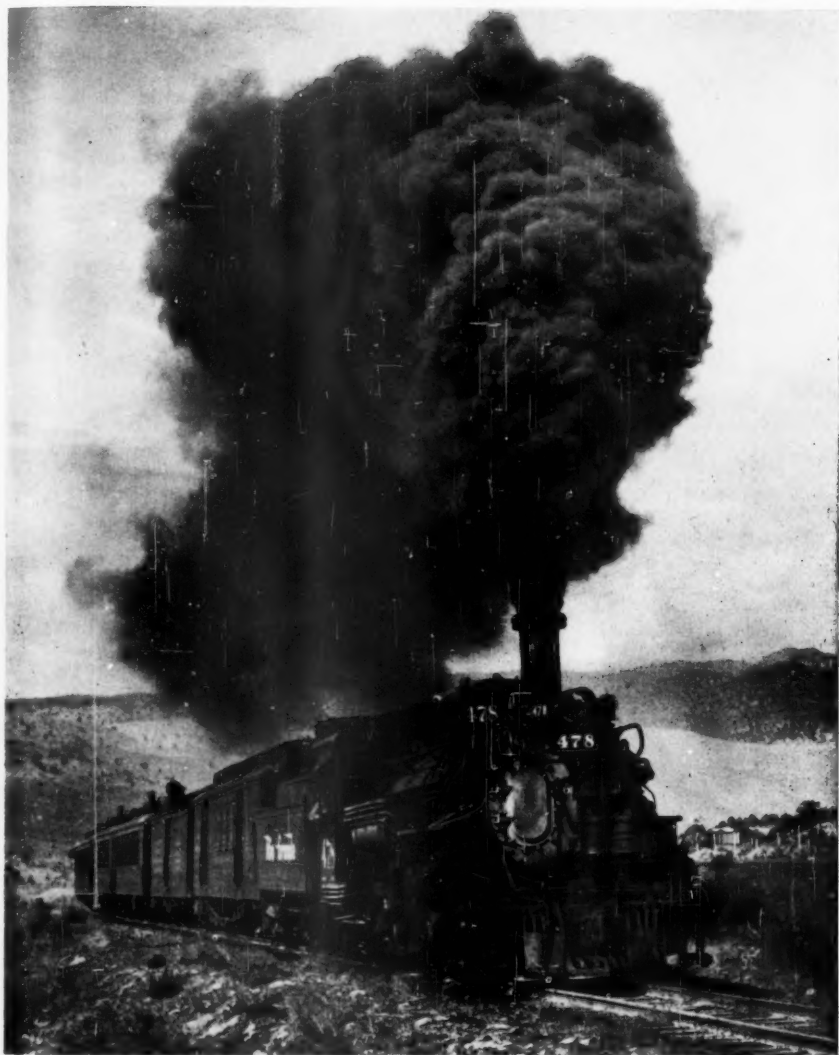
elsewhere. The gleaming and tiny dining compartment of the old parlor car, the courtly presence in this improbable midst of an aged servitor in the great tradition and the dark night outside as the train slowly encompassed hairpin turns in passes on the roof of the western world combined to evoke a mood of mellow melancholy. On such cars had the legendary figures of the golden and pioneer past dined off terrapin and squandered foil topped bottles when the Yankee Girl was the amazement of the mining universe, and the ore from the Argonaut was building marble mansions in Fifth Avenue and paying for diamond necklaces in the shops of the Rue de la Paix. It was on the Silver Palace cars of the Colorado narrow gages that John Morrissey dreamed of spending the profits from the Highland Mary, that Jay Gould plotted a railroad empire and that Haw Tabor told Tom Walsh of the wonderful things he planned for Baby Doe when the Little Pittsburgh should come in. The past was there, as encircling as the Colorado night, as valid and tangible as the plush and oak paneling and the cold plate glass that separated us from the dark. The past and the night and the legend.

Antonito was a brief splash of light and animation. A large and laughing group of Mexicans and Indians, farmers and sheep ranchers from their costume, were down to see a local youth off to the Army. Since the wars were over and a short exposure to the military no more than an interlude away from home and possibly among the wonders of other parts of the land the occasion was loud and happy. Somebody dropped a whisky flask to the platform with a subdued crash. There was laughter and another quickly appeared.

At Antonito, too, the third rail of the standard gage appeared. Until the late thirties the Rio Grande's narrow gage "Chile Line" had run south out of Antonito to Santa Fe, but now that road too was only a memory. It was called the Chile Line because all along the way the native Mexicans had seasonally hung out brilliant bunches of bright red chile beans from the eaves of their houses and, too, because the railroad hauled large consignments of beans to the northern markets.

The triple iron of the Rio Grande from Antonito into Alamosa almost precisely parallels both in distance and in orientation the standard gage rails, twenty-five miles to the east, of the lonely little San Luis Valley Southern Railroad which runs down the center of this fertile valley between Jaroso and Blanca where it connects with the Walsenburg line of the Rio Grande. Both of the stretches of track are predominantly dedicated to exporting the farm products of the San Luis Valley which annually produces fantastically rich crops of pinto beans, potatoes, lettuce and other garden truck.

It was middle evening when the San Juan, its whistle blowing for the grade crossings of the town, rolled slowly into the yards and depot at Alamosa. Matthews folded his Bible and reluctantly slid it into the pocket of his respectable black overcoat. The military draft awoke and looked out the windows to see, on the adjacent three railed track, the overnight train which would have them in Denver for breakfast. We slung our bags down from the observation platform and made our way across the street to the Victoria Hotel, secure in the knowledge that we had imperishably in our souvenirs a ride over the most romantic and also the most nostalgic railroad in the whole United States.

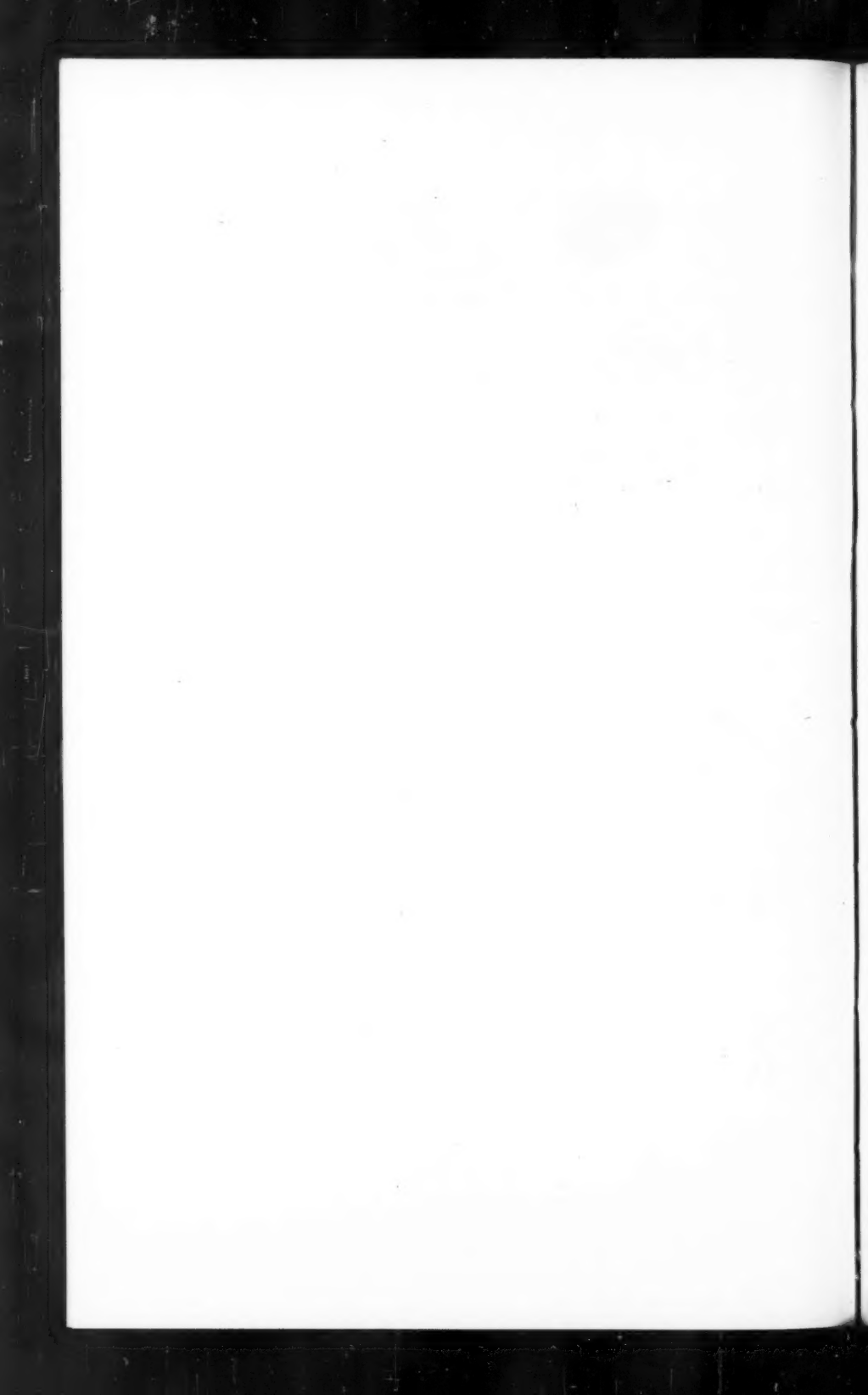


*C. M. Clegg photo.*

#### LAST OF THE NARROW GAGE VARNISH HAULS

The Denver and Rio Grande Western's "San Juan," last remaining narrow gage de luxe passenger train in the United States, on the daily Durango-Alamosa run of 200 miles, climbs out of the valley of the Animas a mile south of Carbon Junction, Colorado. It carries mail, express, baggage and parcel freight, two coaches and an observation-lounge-chair car complete with an all electric kitchen and tiny dining compartment. To many railroaders this is the most romantic passenger run in the world.







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# STEAM POWER ROSTER OF THE RIO GRANDE SOUTHERN — 1941

No.	Type	Steam Pressure	Drivers	Traction Effort	Weight	Builder	Source	Year Built
20	4-6-0	180	42"	18,650	85,000	Schenectady	F & CC	1899
22	4-6-0	180	42"	18,650	85,000	Schenectady	F & CC	1900
40	2-8-0	160	37"	18,947	74,260	Baldwin	D & R G W	1881
41	2-8-0	160	37"	18,947	74,260	Baldwin	D & R G W	1881
42	2-8-0	145	37"	17,100	70,300	Baldwin	D & R G W	1887
455	2-8-2	200	40"	27,000	140,250	Baldwin	D & R G W	1903

## NEW BOOKS

"HIGHBALL," by *Lucius Beebe*, 223 pages, 11 x 8, illustrated, bound in cloth, price \$6.00. Published by D. Appleton-Century Co., New York, N. Y.

This is the fourth book by this well known author of "High Iron," "High Liners" and "Trains in Transition." The title of this book is derived from the old method of hoisting a ball to the top of a pole thus informing the engineer of an approaching train to proceed, first used on the Newcastle & Frenchtown R.R.

The author has divided his work into six chapters. Some Little Railroads includes the Raritan, the Lehigh & Hudson River; East Broad Top; Virginia & Truckee; Bellefonte Central and a host of other roads that will soon be nothing but a memory. Next comes Power for the Grade and here the eastern and western roads are both included. Portrait Gallery and this, as the name implies, is a gallery of "shots" that will appeal to all. The Pennsy and the Pacific is devoted to the K-4s class of that road. Next comes Colorado Chronicle and both "slim" and standard gage are included. Crummies properly closes the book and these though probably of less interest than the locomotive or train are of interest.

One cannot but admire and appreciate this gallery of illustrations of the locomotives and trains — no one can question the ability of the author as a photographer. In this book he has devoted considerable space to the relating of events as they affect the illustrations. To the mind of the writer this not only adds to their value but it makes the book vastly more interesting and takes it out of the picture book class.

Whether you prefer eastern or western, northern or southern "shots" — large trunk line or small connecting line, you will find something of interest in this well worth-while book.

**SANTA FE: THE RAILROAD THAT BUILT AN EMPIRE.** By *James Marshall* (New York: Random House. 1945. Pp. xvi, 465. \$3.75.)

As every railroader — and railway fan — knows, the Santa Fe is the longest railroad in the United States, as well as one of the most important. For three quarters of a century its development has been intimately linked with and in part responsible for the growth of the southwestern quarter of the nation. Yet until the appearance of James Marshall's *Santa Fe*, nothing approaching a complete history of the system has been available; Glenn Bradley's shorter but more scholarly volume, published in 1920,\* brought the story only to 1887. Hence this new book, whatever its defects, is welcome on this score alone.

Mr. Marshall, well known as a journalist, knows what makes a good story and how to tell it. Inevitably, many details that the railway historian would like to know have been omitted, presumably because of limitations of space. Likewise there is scant comparative reference to the national railway scene or to other roads (save direct rivals) that were marching westward at the same time. Yet all the subjects that are covered would assuredly qualify as highlights. In 348 pages of text Mr. Marshall tells when, how, and by whom the road was founded, follows its expansion (usually in terms of the various states), includes a fast moving but clear account on the Royal Gorge War, a colorful sketch of the Harvey organization, and informative chapters on the extensions to the Pacific Coast and to Chicago, the wartime performance of the system, and the technical wonders of the modern railway. Appendices that cover 100 pages include, among other things, a list showing the origin of Santa Fe town names, a dictionary of railway slang, a description of the company's departments, an historical roster of the company's "name trains," a long and useful summary describing the construction and corporate history of every road mile of the system, financial statistics, and a list of Santa Fe "firsts." There are 46 well-chosen photographs illustrating the road's territory, landmarks, motive power and equipment, and portraying the founder and presidents. Photograph-maps of each of the eleven states served show all the railways therein, and there are eight special maps to clarify certain phases of construction.

\*Glenn D. Bradley, *The Story of the Santa Fe*, Boston, 1920.

Throughout the book, Mr. Marshall amply displays his talent for synthesis; he never loses the forest for the trees, and presents complicated negotiations so that they can be readily understood. All in all, he tells his tale with such vigor and color that his book will undoubtedly attract a wide and enthusiastic audience. *Santa Fe* should also prove eminently satisfactory to the railroad that sponsored it as a booster of employee morale and as a strong contributor to better public relations.

As a reference work or as an accurate piece of history, however, this volume lacks merit even by the most charitable standards. Numerous outright errors, contradictions of varying degrees, naive and sweeping statements, inexcusable proof reading, inadequate maps and bibliography, and an almost complete lack of documentation combine to produce a book that is unreliable and of doubtful permanent value.

As to errors, for example, we are told that New Mexico "came into the Union as a free soil territory" (p. 9); that "*the one vote*" that saved Johnson from impeachment was cast by Senator Ross (p. 14, italics supplied); that General Palmer built "The Denver Extension of the Kansas Pacific from Sheridan, Wyoming, down to the Colorado capital. . . ." (p. 130); that Braxton Bragg "was credited with a major share of the Confederate victories at Shiloh and Chickamauga" (p. 216), and so forth. Among the many contradictions, these stand out: the Wakarusa Picnic "was April 26, 1869" (p. 42), but February 9, 1880 was "less than 10 years since the Wakarusa Picnic" (p. 166); 2,000,000 acres on page 57 grows to "about 3,000,000 acres" on page 75; we learn that in 1927 E. P. Ripley was seventy-two years of age "two years over the [retirement] limit" (p. 294), yet in 1933 (at the age of 77 according to the birth date given on page 249) he "retired under the age rules," (p. 326).

There are at least a score of naive and sweeping statements. Random examples of each will suffice (italics supplied): "When they had nothing better to do prairie philosophers in young towns along the track set their minds to grinding out laws for regulating the road on the theory that anyone could run a railroad better than railroad men," (p. 54); "Before the Commission came, the roads had been trying to stop cutthroat competition by means of pools and traffic agreements, and with some success. The Commerce Act forbade such agreements and substituted political control of the roads for business control. This meant that the roads were regulated largely by men who knew little or nothing about railroading" (p. 209); "If anyone was to blame for watering railroad stock, it wasn't the railroads and it wasn't the counties and towns that put up their money to get railroads. Their whole interest lay in exactly the opposite direction. As a matter of fact, hundreds of miles of Western railroads cost twice what they should have, simply because European and a few Eastern financiers didn't have any faith in the West and charged exorbitant prices for the money they lent," (p. 249). On page 18 we are told that "As people later were to laugh at automobiles and flying machines, both 'obviously impossible', so they laughed in the '60's at railroads. Every pike was sneered at as 'two streaks of rust';" on page 159 the Santa Fe, which was by no means the first pioneering railroad, is credited with "following the old, tried Santa Fe pattern of pioneering into a territory and waiting for it to grow up around the track." On page 225 and on page 282 it is strongly implied that Amarillo, Texas, owed its growth solely to the Santa Fe. No doubt motive power specialists will question the unequivocal statement on page 303, "In 1911, its [the Santa Fe's] shops both at Topeka and San Bernardino were erecting locomotives that, until the next batch came out, were always the largest in the world." Perhaps two rather amusing statements should be noted here: Mr. Marshall, forgetting Rule G for the moment, says on page 122 that when railroad men riding in a lounge car are told that the railroads built as many miles as possible in order to secure the maximum acres of government land, the railroaders "usually go back and have a good stiff drink." And in his enthusiasm for cleanliness he announces flatly on page 233 that "Santa Fe station agents were always neat and clean and would stand for no one dirtying up their depots." There are many errors so blatant that they can most charitably be described as proof reading errors. For example, on page 54 it is said that whereas one hundred pounds of barbed wire "cost \$20 at first; in a few years the same amount cost \$180. . . ." The correct figure for 1897 is \$1.80, which is probably what Mr. Marshall meant. On page 151 Mr. Marshall writes that "Strong's plan was to build up to Pueblo" although the road had already arrived there; on page 192 railway fares are quoted between the Pacific Coast and the Missouri River for the year 1866, when, of course, no transcontinental line was in existence. Other obviously typographical errors appear on pp. 293 and 298. In re-

spect to the maps, there is nowhere in the book a single good map of the entire Santa Fe System, no map indicating the chronological progress of the road, and no mileage scale whatever on any of the nineteen maps that do appear. For some obscure reason only one authority is quoted, and that occurs in the text on page 170. With that exception there is no documentation at all although the author feels free to quote exactly from Bradley on page 46 without assigning credit and to argue with the same writer on page 43 without citing any authority for his disagreement. Throughout the book there is no evidence whatever that the author had access to the Santa Fe source records other than those that were handed to him; one looks in vain to find where the company records are if they exist at all, or where the essential Holliday letters (mentioned on page 23) are located. In other words, the book must be accepted on faith even though it is abundantly apparent that it is honeycombed with errors.

In view of the foregoing, an overall appraisal of *Santa Fe* is difficult at best. Unquestionably Mr. Marshall has made available more material about the system than anyone else, and his book is easy, and often absorbing, to read. Hence, he should probably be credited with bringing the story of the railroad home for more people than ever before. But *Santa Fe* raises the question as to whether accurate railway history — the sort that will last and serve as a foundation for later work — can or should be written except by trained railway historians. It is quite true that few of the professionals (especially those within academic circles) can write with Mr. Marshall's facility. But it seems unfortunate that the heavy responsibility of telling a story as significant as the Santa Fe's should be assigned to any one man because of his literary accomplishments rather than his historical talent. In this case genuine collaboration with or criticism by one or more trained historians might well have produced happier results. It is to be hoped that some such procedure can be followed in subsequent books on our nation's railways that attempt to present anything approaching a complete, well-rounded account.

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